

AMJAD M. HUSSAIN

*Islam for new Muslims*  
**AN EDUCATIONAL GUIDE**



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE  
MOST MERCIFUL*

*All praise is to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and peace  
and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad, his family  
and his companions.*

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## **ISLAM FOR NEW MUSLIMS AN EDUCATIONAL GUIDE**

Assoc. Prof. Amjad M. Hussain

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## INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

### ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is intended as an introduction to Islam for new Muslims. Although there are many religious educational guides for Muslims, there are very few contemporary books that are specifically for Muslims that have newly embraced Islam. It is a text exclusively written to assist the person who has recently embraced Islam. In other words, it is a book that is directed towards those who have already been convinced of the truth of Islam and, hence, no arguments are presented herein to attempt to convince the reader of the truth of Islam. Its purpose is to educate the reader, i.e. you, regarding the basics of Islam in a clear and understandable manner in order to give you an impression of how a Muslim is expected to live his or her life. The purpose of this is to highlight the fact that once a person embraces Islam there is still a wealth of education and understanding that the new Muslim requires. Primarily, the new Muslim needs to understand the foundations of his or her new faith accurately and comprehensively; they require guidance concerning the most important practices of their faith, including a good awareness of what deeds he or she must perform and those he or she must avoid as a Muslim. Therefore, this book intends to present to the reader a clear and summarized description of beliefs, acts of worship, a brief account of the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him<sup>1</sup>), the Qur'an and the Sunnah, religious values and standards of conduct, Muslim family life, the calendar of Islam, some of the virtues of Islam and frequently asked questions regarding Islam. Furthermore, the book will introduce to the reader the general meaning of Islam, what reverting back to Islam entails, the main differences that exist between the faith of Islam and other various religions and contesting some of the most common misconceptions of Islam that are unfortunately being spread far and wide. It is important to note that the reader is reminded and encouraged by the author of this book to seek further knowledge regarding Islam through reading additional books and attending religious circles after reading this book; throughout the book recommendations have been made in the footnotes for further reading for the benefit of the New Muslims regarding certain subjects.

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1. The Arabic phrase is *ṣallā Allāh 'alayhi wa-sallam* and in the Qur'an Muslims are asked to pray to God to confer peace and blessings upon the Prophet whenever mentioning his name (see Q. 33:56).

## WHAT IS ISLAM?

Today Islam is one of largest religions in the world claiming, according to a range of estimates, 1.8 billion adherents, more than one fifth of the population of the world. Throughout history Islam has been spread to many nations of the world. In the contemporary world, the Muslims are of many races and include almost all nationalities in the world. They all agree with this simple statement “*La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadu Rasul Allah*” (There is no god except Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). This simple statement of belief in One God and believing that Muhammad is His messenger is the starting point of all that is Islam. In Arabic, the word *Islam* derives from the consonantal root that consists of the three letters *s-l-m* and it means both ‘peace’ and ‘submission to the One God’. Muslim theologians have long noted the significance of this double meaning; specifically, when one submits to God, one finds peace. The term *Muslim* is also derived from the same root as *Islam* and signifies, ‘the person who submits to the One God’. The word *Islam* means ‘submission’ or ‘surrender’ and a Muslim is the ‘one who surrenders’ (to the will of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted), not in the sense of defeat or subjugation but in the sense of the total devotion of the heart and the mind to God and to the living of one’s life accordingly. There is no aspect of an individual or social life that Islam does not touch and transform with regards to the human being’s responsibility to Allah. Islam is a faith that encompasses all spheres of life, social and personal. Islam provides a social and religious structure and framework that governs issues such as family life, law and order, ethics, dress and cleanliness, as well as religious rituals and observance. Islam requires all Muslims to have the belief and the responsibility of performing good deeds; all such deeds are defined by Islam. Basically, due to these beliefs and good deeds a certain righteous attitude should develop in a Muslim towards one’s own self, towards other human beings, towards other creatures and towards Allah, may He be glorified and exalted.

It is important for a new Muslim to know and recognize that Islam is the original and the primordial religion. Islam is a religion that did not commence with the revelation of the Qur’an to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), but rather it is the last revelation in a series of revealed forms of faith that began with the very first human being and have continued over time under various names. Moreover, the new Muslim should understand that Allah, may He be glo-







rified and exalted, conferred upon all human beings an innate nature, which in Arabic is known as *fitrah*. This means that we are born with an awareness of His existence, an innate knowledge that there is a non-corporeal transcendent Being, who created us and the whole of universe. It is for this very reason that any human being that embraces Islam is known as a ‘Revert’ and not as a ‘Convert’, because he or she is returning to their innate nature of recognizing and worshipping Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. Thus, Allah,

may He be glorified and exalted, has since the beginning of the creation of the human being, sent us messengers and prophets to inform us and remind us of Him and His will. In all these cases, there is a similar and familiar core message that, ‘there is no god except Allah’ and that no idols, natural forces or any human being should be considered worthy of worship’. The first messenger was Adam (peace be upon him) and others followed him such as Abraham, Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them all). Islam teaches us that there is continuity in the teachings brought to us by the messengers of God throughout history; that it was people themselves who in the course of time altered and distorted the messages left by the messengers of Allah. Therefore Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, continued to send messengers to remind people of the true teachings of their Creator; finally completing this process by sending the Prophet Muhammad as His last Messenger. The Prophet Muhammad left behind him two primary sources of Islam which may guide Muslims in their quest for peace through submission to Allah. The first is the ‘*Qur’an*’, which is the literal word of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. The second is the ‘*Sunnah*’ (‘way of acting’ or ‘custom’) of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), which is preserved in the *Hadith* literature (records of reports concerning the Prophet’s words, tacit approvals or disapprovals and deeds).

The religion of Islam may broadly be divided into three aspects: belief, acts of worship and spiritual conduct. This is the division between *īmān* (faith), *islām* (submission through actions<sup>2</sup>) and *ihsān* (best conduct). An easy way to understand these three terms is to point out that, *īmān* deals with what Muslims believe in, *islām* relates to what activities Muslims perform and *ihsān* concerns itself with an awareness of the divine at all times and an excellence of conduct that the Muslim should instill in himself or herself. These three terms are never seen as entirely

2. It is important to note here that the word *Islam* is used to describe the individual Muslim’s response to God, as well as being the name of the religion itself.



distinct from each other and their interrelationship is indicated in the following Qur'anic phrase, 'those who believe and do good deeds', which refers to the believers. Although the terms are different they are inseparable; *īmān* cannot be distinct from *Islām*, very much like the inside and the outside of a single object are inseparable. One *hadith* that is often quoted to explain this example is, '*Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good but if it is spoilt the whole body gets spoilt and that is the heart.*'<sup>3</sup> This has been interpreted to mean that the body refers to the *Islām* aspect and the heart represents the *īmān* aspect. The third aspect, *ihsān* is also closely connected to the other two parts as the spiritual feature: it brings the additional element of continuous awareness of God's presence to the Muslim's faith and practice.

A constructive way to explain the relationship between the three aspects mentioned above i.e. the practices required of all Muslims (*islām*), the six articles of faith (*īmān*) and spiritual awareness of the Divine (*ihsān*) is to turn to the famous tradition of Gabriel. It is narrated that one day the Angel Gabriel appeared at a gathering attended by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), disguised as a man with a handsome face, black hair and adorning a white robe. This visitor asked the Prophet to inform him about *islām*. The Prophet replied that Islam is what is known as the declaration of faith (*shahāda*); meaning, witnessing that there is no deity but God and that Muhammad is His Messenger, performing the five daily prayers (*salah*), paying prescribed alms (*zakah*), observing the Ramadan fast (*ṣawm*) and making the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*). These five deeds are known as the five pillars of Islam. Gabriel affirmed that his answer was correct. Gabriel then proceeded to ask the Prophet to tell him about faith (*īmān*). The Prophet answered that faith is to believe in God, His angels, His Books, His prophets, the Day of Judgment and the Divine Decree, both the good of it and the evil of it. Once again, Gabriel affirmed that the Prophet's answer was correct. Then followed the third question, in which Gabriel asked the Prophet regarding *ihsān*. As before, the Prophet confidently replied, "*That you worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, for though you don't see Him, verily, He sees you.*" After hearing this response the Angel Gabriel departed and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) informed his companions that Gabriel had come to teach them about the religion of Islam.<sup>4</sup>

New Muslims should recognize that *īmān*, *islām* and *ihsān* are the three core aspects of their religion, that work together virtually as one. Furthermore, they are also required to know the articles of faith, or 'creed' ('*aqīda*', pl. '*aqā'id*' which are all mentioned in the Qur'an and the Hadith. In the Qur'an, the first five articles of faith are mentioned explicitly: "*It is righteousness—to believe in Allah and the Last*

3. Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book 2, Hadith 45.

4. Sahih Muslim, Book 1, Hadith 1

*Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers.*”<sup>5</sup> In another place in the Qur’an, four articles are mentioned sequentially: “*The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believes in Allah, His Angels, His Scriptures and His Messengers.*”<sup>6</sup> As for the last article of faith, the divine decree is described in the Qur’an as follows: “*Say: Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us: He is our protector*”, and “*On Allah let the believers put their trust.*”<sup>7</sup>

## REVERTING TO ISLAM

Before continuing any further, at this junction the author would firstly like to convey to the reader his heartfelt congratulations on embracing Islam and becoming a Muslim. It is a great blessing from Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, that He has given such individuals the ability and the opportunity to see the truth and the light of Islam. A new Muslim—and, in fact, every Muslim—should always be thankful to Allah and praise Him that He has blessed us with this ever-important knowledge and understanding of His religion. By reverting to Islam, the new Muslim has entered into a new sphere of life that is most likely very different from his or her previous life and how he or she viewed life itself. From this new perspective, the new Muslim will grow in the knowledge and the faith of Islam; he or she will be able to appreciate the blessings and the beauty of the Truth. Insha’Allah, his or her love for Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, and for the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) will reach its zenith.

One of the main challenges that new Muslims come across when they embrace Islam is the question of whether they are obliged to change their individual names. Primarily, the answer is that it is not necessary to change your name after becoming a Muslim. Any name that has a good meaning is acceptable and adaptable in Islam. Notwithstanding, if the new Muslim prefers to give himself or herself an already known Muslim name to support their new Muslim identity then it is completely the wish, the happiness and the of the individual. It is important to note here that according to the *Sunnah* it is recommended to change your original name if it has an undignified or unbefitting meaning. It is reported in a hadith that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “*You will be called on the Day of Resurrection by your names and the names of your fathers, so have good names.*”<sup>8</sup> During the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) he did not require people to

5. Q. 2:177. English translation of the Qur’an.

6. Q. 2:285.

7. Q. 11:51.

8. Sunan Abu Dawud. Book 43, Hadith 176

change their names when they accepted Islam by his hand. He only recommended changing those names that carried erroneous meanings, or such names that had connotations of ideas and concepts rejected by Islam.

It is important for the new Muslim to know that in Islam there is a belief based upon the Qur'an and Hadith, that all human beings are created with an innate nature that has an inarticulate disposition, or awareness of God (*fitrah*). In the Qur'an, Allah has said, *"When your Lord took out the offspring from the loins of the Children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, He said, 'Am I not your Lord?' and they replied, Yes, We bear witness".* So you cannot say on the Day of Resurrection, *"We were not aware of this"...*<sup>9</sup> The covenant that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, took from the progeny of Adam in the previous life has not been erased from our essence and the children of Adam are always in some sense aware of the existence of their Creator. It is this *fitrah* (natural inclination/innate human nature) which instilled in our souls and hearts drives us to believe in Allah and creates the longing in us to know Him. In fact, at one point it may reach a level of such urgency that it pushes and compels us to acknowledge that the Creator, may He be glorified and exalted, is the only perfect Lord, Who bestows His blessings upon us and upon all other created beings. This means that the *fitrah* is based upon an event in the 'Domain of the Spirits' (*'Alam al-Arwa*) where all human beings agreed to a covenant with God on the Day of *Alastu*. Therefore, when an individual embraces Islam, he or she is simply returning to their innate nature; they have simply been reminded of the Covenant they took with God before they were born into this world. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is known to have stated, *"Every child is born on the fitrah and it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian..."*<sup>10</sup>



As a final point in this section, the new Muslim should know that when he or she embraced Islam, Allah forgave all his or her previous sins and wrong deeds. It is reported that a man called Amr came to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and said, "Give me your right hand so that I may give you my pledge of loyalty". The Prophet stretched out his right hand but Amr withdrew his hand. The Prophet said; "What has happened to you, O Amr?" He replied; "I intend to lay down a condition". The Prophet asked him what condition he intended

9. Q. 7:172

10. Muwatta Malik, Book 16, Hadith 53



to lay down. Amr said: “That Allah forgives my sins.” The Prophet told him, “*Didn’t you know that converting to Islam erases all previous sins?*”<sup>11</sup> After embracing Islam, the new Muslim will be recompensed for his or her good and bad deeds according to the following saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), “*If a person accepts Islam, such that his Islam is good, Allah will decree reward for every good deed that he did before, and every bad deed that he did before will be erased. Then*

*after that will come the reckoning; each good deed will be rewarded ten times up to seven hundred times. And each bad deed will be recorded as it is, unless Allah, the Mighty and Sublime, forgives it.*”<sup>12</sup>

In addition to all issues mentioned above, the new revert to Islam will no doubt come across many concerns and inquiries relating to the commencement of his or her life as a new Muslim, such as, the status of the marriage that took place before Islam, family relations and so on. These cases will be dealt with, topic by topic, in the individual chapters of this book. Before we commence our journey towards the main chapters of the book, the reader will briefly be informed about the main difference that exists between Islam and other faiths; in addition he or she will be notified about the most common misconceptions that exist in the present era regarding Islam.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ISLAM AND OTHER FAITHS

Firstly, it is important to note that Islam is the only major religion that has been specifically named by a revealed scripture. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, states in the Qur’an, “This day I have perfected for you your religion, and have bestowed upon you My bounty in full measure, and have been pleased to assign for you Islam as your religion.”<sup>13</sup> All the other well-known religions were named by the followers themselves, either after an individual figure due to a historical context, or due to a geographical setting. For instance, no term such as, ‘Judaism’ is found in the Hebrew Bible. In the Hebrew Bible Jewish people are sometimes called Hebrews and the Children of Israel/Israelites (*b’nei yisrael*). The Children

11. Sahih Muslim, Book 1, Hadith 228

12. Sunan an-Nasa’i, Book 47, Hadith 14

13. Q. 5:6



of Israel began to be referred to as Judeans (*Yehudim*) based upon the name Judah (*Yehuda*), son of the Prophet Jacob (peace be upon him) and, subsequently, based upon the historical fact that since the sixth century before common era their nation was known as the kingdom of Judea (*Yehuda*). Much later these terms entered the English language as 'Judaism'. The name of the religion of Christianity originated in the Greek language from the word '*Christos*', the equivalent for the Hebrew term '*Masiah*' (Messiah), the entitlement of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). Earlier sources indicate that the early followers of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) were known simply as members of the 'Way'. Only when this religion was spread outside the Hebrew speaking community, amongst the Greek speaking communities, did the followers begin to use the term Christianity for their faith. Originally in the Indian subcontinent, 'Hinduism' was referred to by the adherents of this tradition as '*vaidika dharma*', specifically named after their scriptures the '*Vedas*'. The term, 'Hinduism' is in fact a very recently coined umbrella term, invented by the British during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after the Indus River in India, to refer to the religious traditions of the majority of the Indian people. Finally, Buddhism as a faith was specifically named as '*Dharma of Buddha*' by Buddha Siddhartha Gautama's followers after his death. All the above examples of the names of the different religions highlight that only Islam has a divine endorsement for being the religion specifically chosen by Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, for all of humankind. In fact, during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century it was common for missionaries and Orientalists to refer to Islam as *Mohamedanism* and to Muslims as *Mohamedans*. They tried to allocate a name to it in much the same manner as the other main world religions had received their names. However, this is very unacceptable to the divine faith of Islam named by God himself.<sup>14</sup>

The other main difference between Islam and other religions is that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was sent by Allah for all of humankind. Whereas the Orthodox Jews consider themselves to be a chosen race and believe that their message is meant exclusively for themselves. Thus, many orthodox Jews do not believe in proselytizing their faith. The New Testament also makes it clear that Jesus' mission was to the Tribes of Israel, however, it is evident that later Christians made it an obligation upon themselves to propagate their faith to all of humankind. The Hindus believe that all people should follow their *dharma* of their birth i.e. the religion you are born into; due to this belief they do not believe in any kind of proselytizing. Buddhism on the other hand, preaches a way of life where the existence of God is not important; instead, they focus only on the human being's release from this world. In contrast to the above mentioned examples, Allah has decreed that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is His final

14. Amjad M. Hussain, *The Study of Religions: An Introductions*, İstanbul: IFAY, 2015.

messenger and has been sent to all humankind. Allah says, “*Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the Prophets. And Allah is Ever All-Aware of everything*”<sup>15</sup> Obviously, there are many other differences between Islam and the other world religions but at this point two main concepts need to be well-defined for the new Muslim.<sup>16</sup> Primarily, that Islam is the only sanctioned divine religion; secondly, that submission to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, can only be achieved through the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), who is the last Messenger of Allah. Let us now focus on the most common contemporary misconceptions regarding Islam.

## DEBUNKING COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS OF ISLAM

In this section the author will attempt to address some of the main misconceptions regarding Islam. Firstly, there is the misconception that is widely propagated that all Muslims are Arabs. However, the Arabs make up only 15% of the world’s Muslim population. As a matter of fact the Middle East comes in third, after Asia coming in at first (69%) and Africa (27%) coming in at second, with nations that have the most Muslim populations. The second major misconception is that Muslims do not accept Jesus. Therefore, many people are astonished to discover that according to Muslim belief, Jesus is one of the greatest messengers of God. Moreover, it is not possible to be a Muslim without believing in the virgin birth and the many miracles of Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus is mentioned numerous times in many verses of the Qur’an and is often used as an example of good virtue and character. The main difference between Christianity and Islam is that Muslims do not believe that Jesus is the son of God.

A further misconception concerning Islam is that it is intolerant towards other religions. ‘Kill the infidel’ is the phrase many people believe is the ideology that Muslims have towards the non-Muslims. In contrast, the truth is that Islam has always held other faiths in great respect and allowed their followers the freedom to practice their religion in peace. In the Qur’an, it is stated: “*Allah does not forbid you, with regards to those who fight you not for religion nor drive you away out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them, for Allah loves those who are just.*”<sup>17</sup> There are numerous historical examples of Muslim tolerance towards other faiths, such as, when Caliph Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) granted freedom to all religious communities in Jerusalem and said that the inhabitants of

15. Q. 33:40

16. For further reading on this subject please see Amjad M. Hussain, *The Study of Religions: An Introductions*, Istanbul: IFAV, 2015.

17. Q. 60:8

his city were safe and that their places of worship would never be taken away from them. He also set up courts that were designated to the non-Muslim minorities.

A further common contemporary misconception based upon the above mentioned issue is that Islam promotes violence and terrorism. On the contrary, the truth is that Islam prohibits terrorism; killing an innocent person is considered a great crime in Islam. In the Qur'an it is stated, *"For this reason, We made it a law for the children of Israel that the killing of a person for reasons other than legal retaliation or for stopping corruption in the land is as great a sin as murdering all of humankind. However, to save a life would be as great a virtue as to save all of humankind..."*<sup>18</sup> In relation to this topic and the views regarding it, many people may have heard of the Arabic term, '*Jihad*', which is misinterpreted to mean 'holy war' when in actuality it means 'to strive, to apply oneself, to struggle, and to persevere'. Jihad can be personal or it can be a community of persons struggling against oppression. In essence, it means to be closer to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, in lifestyle and community. This type of struggle (*jihad*) is to ensure that a peaceful and equitable community continues to exist. Defensive means are acceptable to safeguard the wellbeing of the community; however, offensive aggression is strictly prohibited. It is famously reported that Muhammad returned from a battle and said, *"We have returned from the lesser jihad (going into battle) to the greater jihad (the struggle of the soul)."* This means that a Muslim's struggle against his or her self is far more important than the *jihad* of going into war. It is important to also know that martyrdom in Islam is not only when a person dies at war. A person who dies while performing the pilgrimage to Mecca, a woman who dies while giving birth, or even a person who drowns are all considered martyrs.

Another misconception based upon the misunderstanding mentioned above, is the notion that Islam was spread by the sword. There is no record in history that shows people being forced at the point of the sword to convert to Islam. In fact, Muslim history has shown that once under Muslim rule, people of different faiths were allowed the freedom to profess, manifest, and practice their faith. For instance, it is a historical fact that while most of Persia became Muslim in a much shorter period after the conquest of the Muslims, most of the citizens of conquered eastern Byzantium (i.e. Middle East) did not begin to embrace Islam until the eighth century. According to the book *Late Antiquity, A Guide to the Post-Classical*



18. Q. 5:32

*World*, the Muslim population in the new Islamic realm (up to approximately 800 CE) was counted as a minority, around 5% of the whole. Accordingly, a Muslim population majority in the Middle East is considered to have occurred around the late ninth century.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the Muslims who spread Islam to the West, including Spain and Morocco, and all the way to India and China in the East, were too small and insignificant in their numbers to impose Islam on the large number of people in these regions.

Perhaps one of the most popular contemporary misconceptions in relation to Islam is that it guides its followers to oppress women, whereas, in actuality nothing can be further from the truth because Islam promotes women's rights. For instance, in the Qur'an Allah grants women freedoms that previous civilizations did not offer, such as, the right to inherit property, the opportunity to conduct business and to have access to knowledge. Despite such an emphasis on the rights and freedom of women in Islam, the oppression that many women face in Muslim countries today is an unfortunate result of degenerate and backward cultural traditions as opposed to the teachings of Islam. In the Muslim world today, the unfair persecution of women, the denial or violation of their basic rights, including their right to inherit property, is all too familiar to overlook. It should be noted that during pre-Islamic Arabia, women were considered as the property of men, and therefore, denied independence and freedom. The birth of a daughter in a family was considered humiliating and the practice of female infanticide was rampant. The verses in the Qur'an condemned such practices as female infanticide, and gave women rights considered inalienable. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is reported to have said, "*Indeed women are the partners of men*"<sup>20</sup> underscoring the equality of the two before Allah, especially in terms of rights and obligations. Thus, while there are cultures in the Muslim world that still implement harsh and unjust judgments against women, such practices are not inherent to Islam nor are they a part of the diverse Muslim culture that can trace its roots back fourteen centuries to the earliest Muslims in Arabia i.e. Mecca and Medina.

19. Bowersock, Brown and Grabar (eds.), *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Post-Classical World*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press), 1999, p. 517.

20. Al-Tirmidhi, Book 1, Hadith 112.





## THE FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM: THE SIX ARTICLES OF FAITH

## THE FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM: THE SIX ARTICLES OF FAITH

The six articles of faith mentioned in the Hadith of Gabriel are divided into three categories. The first category is *tawhīd* (meaning the oneness and uniqueness of God), which specifically refers to the first article of faith i.e. belief in Allah; it also refers to the last article of faith i.e. the divine decree. The second category is known as *risāla* or *nubuwwa* (meaning the message or prophecy); it consists of three of the articles of faith i.e. the belief in the angels, the prophets and messengers and the revealed scriptures of God. The third and last category is variously referred to as *al-Ākhira*, *al-Qiyāma* or *al-Ma'ād* (the Hereafter, the Judgment Day and the Return); it includes the belief in Paradise, Hell and Judgment Day. These six articles of faith are known in Arabic as, '*al-Imān al-Mufasssal*' (detailed expression of faith) which states, "I believe in God, in His angels, in His scriptures, in His messengers, in the Last Day (Day of Judgment) and in the resurrection after death, and the firm believe that whatever happens of good or bad is decided by God Almighty."

In many texts the basic beliefs are stated as six, just as it is in this book, where belief in the 'Day of Judgment' is included in the belief concerning 'Resurrection after Death'. It is important at this juncture for the new Muslim to know that the six articles of faith simply represent the main foundations of belief in Islam, which divide into many further branches. This can be compared to the five pillars of Islam, which are not the only obligatory actions in Islam, but rather they are a representation of the main foundations of Islam's obligatory acts of worship. Let us now proceed further to each one of the articles of faith.<sup>21</sup>

### ALLAH

Allah is an Arabic term, which means the One God. By definition every Muslim believes in Allah, who is known to be the Creator and the Sustainer of all things that exist. Islam holds that Allah transcends the possession of any physical attributes, nor is He bound by any of the limitations of human beings or of anything else. He has no parents, no children, no associates and no partners. God is, however, described by His "ninety nine names", such as, the Creator, the Sustainer,

21. For further detailed study on the Muslim Creed see Amjad M. Hussain, *The Muslim Creed: A Contemporary Study of Theology*, Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 2016 and Abu Jafar al-Tahawi, *The Creed of Imam al-Tahawi*, Hamza Yusuf (tr.), New York: Zaytuna Institute, 2007.

the Merciful, the Light and the Forgiver and so on. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says in the Qur'an, "*And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, 'We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our God and your God is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam).'*"<sup>22</sup> For Muslims, Qur'an is the word of God and in it He repudiates many of the notions about Himself found in other religions. He speaks of Himself as the One, the Unique, the Absolute, the Infinite, the Origin and the End of all things; He is the Creator and the Sustainer; He is the Giver of life and death; thus, all things return to Him. Islam categorically declares God to be far beyond possessing any of the creaturely attributes which may be ascribed to Him nor does Islam consider Him to be bound by any of the limitations of human beings or anything else He has created. Thus, God is One as is stated it in the Qur'an, "*Say, He is God, the One, God the Eternal. He begot no one nor was He begotten. No one is comparable to Him*".<sup>23</sup>

In the Qur'an the core experience of Islam is described as comprehending the unity of God (*tawhīd*), where His oneness and His uniqueness are highlighted. It is in the first pillar of Islam that one finds the main belief in Allah; that is the *shahāda*, which is testifying that, 'There is no god (divinity) but God and Muhammad is His messenger.' The first part of the *shahāda* and the first article of faith (to believe in One God) are inextricably linked to each other. To believe in Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, as it is stated in the first article of faith, means to negate any other deity and affirm the belief in the oneness and uniqueness of God. This declaration first removes the notion that anything in creation is worthy of being worshipped and then stresses the existence of God, Who is the only One Who deserves to be worshipped.

The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, should be understood simultaneously. In other words, no one single attribute can be understood separately; all ninety-nine attributes holistically explain the nature of God. God is not just the Most Merciful, the Loving, the Giver of life and the Forgiving; He is also the Just, the Distresser, the Giver of death and the Avenger. It is clear that these names could easily belong to two distinct categories; one is warm and embracing whilst the other one seems to instill a sense

22. Q. 24:46.

23. Q. 112:1-4.





of awe and fear. Yusuf Ali, the celebrated exegete and translator of the Qur'an, explained that the ninety-nine names merge into each other just like the night merges into the day. He wrote, "To some it may appear strange or even irreconcilable that God should be both Merciful and Just; that He should both protect His devotees and yet ask for their self-sacrifice; that he should command them to return good for evil, and yet permit retaliation under certain restrictions. But such thoughts are short-sighted. Do they not see many inconsis-

tencies in all life, all nature, and all creation? Why, even in such simple phenomena as night and day, the one merges into the other, and no one can tell when precisely the one begins and the other ends. Yet we can see in a rough sort of way that the one gives rest and the other activity, that the one reveals the beauties of the starry heavens and the other the splendor of the sun. In countless ways, we can see there the wisdom and the fine artistry of God. And there are subtle nuances and merging in nature that our intelligence can hardly penetrate".<sup>24</sup>

As mentioned earlier, God in Islam is described in both the Qur'an and Hadith by the utilization of the ninety-nine names, such as, the Most Merciful, the Living, the Guide, the Holy, the Self-subsisting, the Wise, the Sovereign King and the Light. In the Qur'an Muslims are asked to use these names to call upon Him. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says, "The most beautiful names belong to Allah: so call on him by them."<sup>25</sup> These names are also referred to as the attributes of God. These attributes are however understood in an absolute sense, free from human deficiencies and they are understood as being harmonious with the notion of an all-powerful God.<sup>26</sup>

## ANGELS

Muslims have been informed that Angels are created by Allah from light and that they have forms. However, they are not to be confused with the classical western images of angels in human form, with wings and halos, nor should they be misperceived with such notions as ghosts. The angels are creations entirely differ-

24. Q. 7:180, footnote no. 2841.

25. Q. 7:180.

26. For further detailed study on the subject of God please see Amjad M. Hussain, *The Muslim Creed: A Contemporary Study of Theology*, Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 2016, pp. 43-83.



ent from human beings, and unlike human beings, they have not been bestowed with free will. Angels are there to do the bidding of their Lord and have been assigned differing and widely ranging functions. For example, there is the angel of death, angels who record everything that transpires in a person's life and angels who were responsible for delivering revelations to Prophets.

The Arabic word for angel, '*malak*' (which literally means messenger or envoy), is mentioned ninety times in the Qur'an. Some of these verses clearly highlight the role of angels as messengers of God. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says in the Qur'an, "God chooses messengers from angels and from men."<sup>27</sup> One understanding of this verse is that angels are sent as messengers to men, such as, Moses, John the Baptist and Jesus, who are then entrusted with the responsibility to serve as messengers to their fellow human beings. According to the Qur'an, if angels were clearly seen walking upon the earth then all the humans would be forced to believe in this phenomenon on the basis of its empirical proof, but a believer must be given free choice to believe in the unseen, that is the true test of life.<sup>28</sup> In the Qur'an, angels such as Gabriel, Michael, *Hārūt* and *Mārūt* are referred to by their individual names. In the Hadith corpus, there are other angels who are mentioned by name, such as, '*Azrā'īl*', the angel of death, *Munkar* and *Nakīr*, who question the dead in their graves; and *Isrāfīl*, who is responsible for blowing the horn on the Day of Judgment.<sup>29</sup> In both the Qur'an and Hadith, it is stated that each human being is accompanied by two angels who act as record keepers throughout the person's life, recording individual sins and good deeds.<sup>30</sup> This fact is acknowledged within the five daily prayers. All Muslims are required to end their prayers with the greeting, 'Peace be upon you,' while turning to the right and then to the left, acknowledging the existence of the two angels that are present with them.

The angels were created out of light and they occupy a plane of existence near to God that is beyond human perception. Angels are dissimilar to human beings in the sense that they do not eat, drink, procreate or sleep, and are devoid of sin. According to many statements in the Qur'an and *Hadith*, angels are capable of metamorphosis; for example, the angel Gabriel came to Mary in the form of a man to tell her the news of a blessed son, he also approached the Prophet Muhammad in form of a handsome man to teach the Muslims their religion by speaking about *Imān*, *Islam* and *Ihsān*. Thus, angels can take the shape of anything that God wills.

27. Q. 22:75.

28. Q. 6:8–9.

29. Karima Diana Alawi, 'Pillars of Religion and Faith,' in Vincent J. Cornell, ed., *Voices of Islam*, London: Praeger Publishers, 2006, p. 34.

30. Murata and Chittick, *Vision of Islam*, p. 84.

In the Qur'an, the absolute obedience of the angels to God is strongly stressed, as is their lack of free will.

Even though angels are created beings, no source indicates when the angels were created; knowledge about them begins with the account of their witnessing the creation of Adam. As stated in the Qur'an, they were asked to prostrate in front of the first human being to honor him: *"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vice-regent on earth.' The angels said, 'Wilt thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? Whilst we celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy name?' He said: 'I know what ye know not.'"*<sup>31</sup> Various other historical events mentioned in the Qur'an and *Hadith* involve angels, such as the angels who came to warn Noah about the flood, the angels who visited Abraham in human form to give good news about the birth of his son, the angels who came in the form of young men to deliver Lot from impending danger, the angels *Hārūt* and *Mārūt* who descended upon Babylon, and the angel Gabriel who came to give good news to Mary about the birth of Jesus.<sup>32</sup> At the moment of Jesus's conception, God sent angel Gabriel to Mary in the form of a man: *"Then We sent to her Our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects."*<sup>33</sup> All previous messengers such as Adam, Abraham, and Noah (peace be upon them) were supported by angels and Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was no exception. One of Prophet Muhammad's first encounters with an angel took place at the beginning of the revelation of the Qur'an. At the age of forty, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) walked up to a cave on Mount *Ḥirā'* for his habitual spiritual retreat during the month of Ramadan. Once inside the cave he heard a voice saying, 'Recite!' but Prophet Muhammad responded that he could not. According to the earliest sources, the voice that the Prophet heard belonged to an angel who appeared to him in the form of a man; Muhammad would later come to know this angel by the name of Gabriel. The angel seized Muhammad and again told him to recite, but once again the Prophet replied that he could not. After a third time, the angel recited, *"Proclaim! (or recite!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created—created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood. Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, He Who taught (the use of) the pen, taught man that which he knew not."*<sup>34</sup> After this encounter, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) relates that the enormity of the first revelation were "as though the words were written on my heart."<sup>35</sup> Over the next twenty-three years, Muhammad maintained a personal

31. Q. 2:30.

32. Abdu'l-Hamid Kishk, *The World of the Angels*, London: Dār al-Taḳwa, 1994, pp. 31–41.

33. Q. 14:17.

34. Q. 96:1–5.

35. Quoted by Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based Upon The Earliest Sources*, Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, p. 44.

relationship with the angel Gabriel. At first, this interaction was confined to the revelation of the Qur'an during Muhammad's years in Mecca when he and his community were persecuted by the Meccan Arabs. However, the angel Gabriel also taught Muhammad about many aspects of the religion. After thirteen years of persecution in Mecca, Muhammad and his Companions sought refuge in the city of Yathrib, which was later renamed *al-Madīna al-Nabawīyah* (or more commonly in English, Medina), the city of the Prophet. This period of Muhammad's life featured further encounters with angels, such as further revelations brought by angel Gabriel and angels supporting the believers in the various battles.<sup>36</sup>



## THE REVEALED SCRIPTURES

What are the scriptures that Muslims are asked to believe in? According to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, they are all of the scriptures revealed to Allah's messengers throughout human history before Muhammad. For instance, in the Qur'an it says: "We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the messengers after him. We sent inspiration to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms."<sup>37</sup> Twice, the Qur'an refers to an unidentified scripture revealed to the Prophet Abraham—the *Ṣuḥuf Ibrāhīm*, which is sometimes translated as the Scrolls of Abraham.<sup>38</sup> However, the four scriptures explicitly named in the Qur'an are the Torah (*Tawrāt*), which was revealed to the Prophet Moses; the Psalms (*Zabūr*), which were revealed to the Prophet David; the Gospel (*Injīl*), which was revealed to the Prophet Jesus; and the Qur'an itself, which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>39</sup> Muslims therefore understand the Qur'an as Allah's final revelation in the same way that they recognize the prophet Muhammad as the Seal of the prophets. This understanding is based on the words of the Qur'an itself: "*Step by step, He has sent the scripture down to you [Muhammad] with the truth, confirming what went before; He sent*

36. For further information on the Angels please see Amjad M. Hussain, *The Muslim Creed: A Contemporary Study of Theology*, Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 2016, pp. 83-108.

37. Q. 4:163.

38. Q. 87:9–19; Q. 53:36–62.

39. Cornell, ed., *Voices of Islam*, p. 36.



*down the Torah and the Gospel as a guide for people. He has sent down the distinction [between right and wrong]”<sup>40</sup>* Scripture has traditionally been understood as being the literal word of God. Anything written about a messenger after his death would therefore not qualify as scripture on account of being a human product. This definition of scripture requires that anything considered revelation must strictly come from God Himself; thus, human speech about God or anything simply attributed to Him cannot meet these re-

quirements. Thus, Muslims believe that the original Torah was given to Moses, the original Psalms to David, the original Gospel to Jesus, and the original Qur'an to Muhammad. They believe, however, that the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospel in their original form have been lost as the scriptures were altered and corrupted by human beings over time. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is now the only revealed scripture that has not been changed from its original form. As a consequence of this the 'Word of God' as understood in various denominations of Judaism and Christianity as being indirectly attributed to God or inspired reports of what was witnessed about various figures in the Bible is not considered revelation amongst the vast majority of Muslims. However, if it is directly attributed to God such as when God spoke to Moses, then such communication may be regarded as revelation. Furthermore, for Muslims, the language of scripture must be the same as that in which it was revealed. This means that any translation, being a human product, is not strictly speaking, the Word of God.

In the Qur'an, the communities to whom messengers and revelations were sent prior to the advent of Muhammad's Ummah are described as *Ahl al-Kitāb* (literally, People of the Book); meaning a people who have been given a divine writ or revelation. The scriptures that were revealed prior to the Qur'an are believed to have been sent to particular groups of people and nations. By comparison, the only scripture believed to be universally intended for humanity according to Muslim theologians is the Qur'an. The three scriptures Torah (*Tawrāt*), the Psalms (*Zabūr*), and the Gospel (*Injīl*), are therefore understood as having been specifically addressed to the nation of Israel (or as it later was called, Judea). It is stated in the Qur'an, *"It was We who revealed the law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the prophets who bowed (as in Islam) to Allah's will, by the rabbis and the doctors of the law: for to them was entrusted*

40. Q. 3:3-4.



*the protection of God's book, and they were witnesses thereto [...]*"; and *"in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him. We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: guidance and an admonition to those who fear God."*<sup>41,42</sup>

## PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS

In the 'Qur'an it is said, *"Truly in the heavens and the earth are signs for the believers. And in your creation and in that which He spreads [over the earth] from among the beasts are signs for a people who are pious. And [in] the alteration of the night and day, and the nourishment that God sends down from the sky, then by which He revives the earth after its death, and [in] the dispensation of the winds are signs for people who discern. These are the signs of Allah. We recite them to you with truth. So in what account after Allah and His signs will they believe?"*<sup>43</sup> These kinds of verses (*ayāt*) in the Qur'an, which in Arabic is the same word used for sign (*ayah*) from Allah, remind the reader that every aspect of creation is a message and throughout human history that message has been sustained through the messengers, *"Every nation had a messenger."*<sup>44</sup> As stated in the introduction to this book, Islam does not view itself as a fifteen hundred year old religion but rather a faith that has been revealed in various forms throughout human history. The word Islam in this sense denotes not only the final form of the religion revealed to Muhammad but also any faith that was revealed before him that subscribed to the ideology of believing in the One and the Unique God. Islam in this sense means submission to God; in the Qur'an the various messengers and their followers before Muhammad, who propagated their faiths are therefore described as *muslimūn* (the ones who submit to the One God).<sup>45</sup> Islam describes all these faiths as tailored differently for their time and society, nevertheless, all re-iterated the same message of the oneness of God. Whatever form of revelation was sent to the prophets and the messengers throughout human history, was not entirely new. In essence these prophets and messengers constituted, renewed and recalibrated forms of the original divine message, exhorting human beings to reflection, remembrance and a proper understanding of God.

41. Q. 5:44, 46.

42. For more information on the Revealed Scriptures, please see Amjad M. Hussain, *The Muslim Creed: A Contemporary Study of Theology*, Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 2016, pp. 162-197.

43. Q. 14:3-6

44. Q. 10:47

45. Joseph Lumbard, (2006), *Prophets & Messengers of God*, in Vincent J. Cornell (ed.), *Voices of Islam*, (Praeger Publishers Inc), p. 103.

So what and who is a prophet (*nabi*)? It is common to misunderstand the word prophet in our contemporary times to mean that it refers to someone who prophesizes the future. However, in Islam the Arabic word *nabī* has no such connotations, even though some prophetic messages have been known to be connected to future events. The root of the term '*nabī*' in Arabic derives from two meanings; to give news and to be exalted by God. Thus, a prophet (*nabī*) in Islam is not in any way divine but is seen to be an exceptional mortal human being who is chosen by God and is given a communiqué to convey to the people. In addition to the term '*nabī*', Islamic primary sources frequently use the term '*rasūl*' (messenger) for prophets. The Arabic term '*rasūl*' refers to a person that conveys messages. From the overall usage in the Qur'an it is clear that the term '*nabī*' is wider in its scope than the term '*rasūl*'. The term *nabī* (prophet) denotes every person chosen by God to receive a message, whereas, the term *rasūl* (messenger) denotes the relatively small number of prophets who were chosen to receive an oral and/or a written scripture that was the basis of the revealed faith. Thus, a messenger is always also a prophet but not vice versa. For example, the most known of the prophets who were also messengers in Islamic theology, are Adam (the first prophet and messenger), Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (who is accepted as the last prophet and messenger of Allah). Then there are further examples of those individuals mentioned in the Quran who were prophets but not messengers, such as, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph; who all followed the scriptures and laws given to the Prophet Abraham. Similarly, prophets such as Aaron, Samuel and John the Baptist followed the main scripture and laws given to the messenger Moses. In the Hadith literature Muhammad spoke of 124,000 prophets, elected from all nations from the time of Adam to himself; whereas, he only mentioned 313 or 315 out of them to have been messengers i.e. someone who was chosen to receive a scripture and establish a revealed religion.<sup>46</sup>

At this juncture it is very important for new Muslims to understand the concept of the inimitability (*'isma*) of the prophets. According to the sources, all prophets are preserved from erring in the reception and the deliverance of the message revealed to them by Allah. It does not imply that they are not human or that they are free from human weaknesses. However, it needs to be emphasized that according to Islam, all the prophets and the messengers are *ma'sūm* (protected) from moral decadence and sin. The prophets have been recognized to have possessed four necessary attributes<sup>47</sup>; they had to be truthful (*sidq*), trustworthy (*amāna*), proclaim

46. Sachiko Murata & William C. Chittick, (1996), *The Vision of Islam*, (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers), pp. 133-134

47. It is also agreed that the four attributes necessarily impossible for the prophets are the opposites of the previous four, namely lying, treachery, concealing what they were ordered to reveal, and feeble-mindedness. The one attribute possible for the prophets is that any human state that

the Divine Word (*tablīgh*) and had to be sagacious and intelligent (*fatāna*); in other words, inerrancy is acknowledged as a very important criterion for the station of a prophet and a messenger. Furthermore, the prophets and messengers are also acknowledged to have possessed qualities that cannot be imitated. The most well-known of these merits is the ability to perform miracles (*mu'jizāt*), which can only be executed by the prophets of Allah, the rule being that it is only achieved with the leave of Allah. Some of the well-known miracles of the prophets include healing by the Prophet Jesus and the parting of the red sea by the Prophet Moses.



To reiterate, Allah has only revealed one religion (i.e. the way of submitting to the One God), but He sent messengers with different laws and paths relating to that one religion, throughout time. Prophets continued to be chosen by God to lead people back to the original teachings, every time the original teaching was altered, until the last prophet Muhammad, who brought the final law and path, superseding all past revealed faiths. In the Qur'an, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is given the title, 'the Seal of the Prophets', meaning that he was the last human being to receive such guidance and revelation.<sup>48</sup> Prophet Muhammad elaborated on this title in his farewell sermon, "*O People, no Prophet or Messenger will come after me and no faith will be born after me.*"<sup>49</sup> It is a major part of the Muslim creed to accept the designation of Muhammad as the 'Seal of the Prophets', meaning that there will be no new Shari'ah after Muhammad nor will there be an appearance of a new religion or Prophet/Messenger. This also signifies that Islam is accepted as the final religion, and Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has Himself taken a pledge that His religion of Islam will stay pure until the Day of Judgment.<sup>50</sup>

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does not detract from their rank, such as eating, sleeping, marrying, and illnesses not repellent to others; although God protected them from every offensive physical trait and everything unbecoming them, keeping them from both lesser sins and enormities, before their prophethood and thereafter.

48. Q. 33:40

49. Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 1623, 1626, 6361

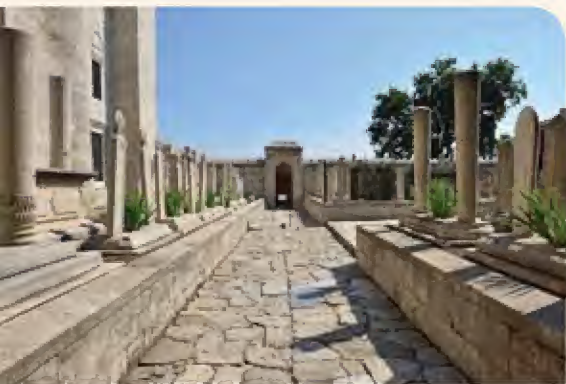
50. For further information on the Messengers/Prophets of God please see Amjad M. Hussain, *The Muslim Creed: A Contemporary Study of Theology*, Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 2016, pp. 108-162.

## THE HEREAFTER

Muslims believe that this life is very short in comparison to the life of the hereafter. Muslims are required to have faith in the reality of the hereafter, the Day of Judgment, Resurrection, Paradise and Hell.<sup>51</sup> This is known as belief in ‘*ākhirā*’ (afterlife) or as ‘*Ma‘ād*’, which is another term for the Afterlife and it literally means, ‘the Return’ or ‘the Place of Return’.<sup>52</sup> This expression originates from the Qur’an derived from verses such as, “*They say: What! When we are reduced to bones and dust, should we really be raised up (to be) a new creation? Say: “(Nay!) be ye stones or iron, or created matter which, in your minds, is hardest (to be raised up), (Yet shall ye be raised up)! Then will they say: Who will cause us to return? Say: He who created you first [...]”*”<sup>53</sup> Based on the systematic study of the word ‘*Ma‘ād*’ in verses such as the one mentioned above, it is interesting to note that this term has always been paired with ‘*Mabda*’, which means, ‘Origin’ or ‘the Place of Origin’. The term ‘*Mabda*’ is found in Qur’anic verses such as: “*The Day that We roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for books (completed), even as We originated the first creation, so shall We produce a new one. A promise We have undertaken: truly shall We fulfill it.*”<sup>54</sup>

This belief can be understood in relation to the belief in the journey of humanity between the origin and the return, the realms of Paradise (*Janna*), Hell (*Jahannam*) and the *Barzakh*, which is an intermediate state between death and the resurrection, and the apocalyptic events of the Last Days. It is vital that the new Muslim

knows that the basic message of Islam is that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has created humanity for a purpose, that there is a continuation of life after death and that there is a final reckoning. The origin and return of all creation means that all creatures, individually and collectively, are subject to extinction, to death and decay, to a change from one state to another and to a transition from one abode to the next. In comparison, God is recognized as Almighty, the Eminent, the Forgiving, the Manager of all affairs, and the Maker of des-



51. For further detailed information on the Messengers/Prophets of God please see Amjad M. Hussain, *The Muslim Creed: A Contemporary Study of Theology*, Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 2016, pp. 197-242.

52. Murata and Chittick, *Vision of Islam*, p. 340.

53. Q. 17:49–51.

54. Q. 21:104.



tinies. He alone has permanence across all of the ages, stages and lifetimes, which by necessity must wane and perish.

According to Islam, Muslims believe that before the resurrection, each person will meet his or her death in this world at a destined time (*ajal*); this belief is further reinforced by verses of the Qur'an such as: *"To every people is a term appointed: when their term is reached, not an hour can they cause delay, nor (an hour) can they advance (it in anticipation)"*.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, according to Islam, at a point in history, the absolute destruction of the universe or the cosmic death known as 'the Hour' (*Sā'a*) will take place at a determined time which, Allah alone knows. In Islam it is acknowledged that God has created humanity for a purpose, which is to worship Him, and as part of the continuation of life after death, there will be an ultimate accounting, whereby, God's justice will be served. It is on that day, the Day of Judgment, that the individual and the collective meet and are led to their final abode in the hereafter.

This whole idea of the Return is linked to the origin of humanity; when humanity had to leave its original home and was promised the possibility of a return. The Qur'an and the Hadith tradition are rich with descriptions of the creation of Adam and Eve, and their representations as the origin of humanity. Their origin began with their creation and their residence within the Garden, "We said: 'O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not this tree, or ye will run into harm and transgression.' Then did Satan make them slip from the (garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been. We said: 'Get ye down, all (ye people), with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood—for a time.' Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord turned towards him; for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful. We said: 'Get ye down all from here; and if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from me, whosoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. But those who reject faith and belie Our signs, they shall be companions of the Fire; they shall abide therein.'"<sup>56</sup>

The expulsion of Adam and Eve (peace be upon them) from the Garden described in this verse was a result of satanic deception and was immediately forgiven when Adam begged for forgiveness. It is important to note that in Islamic tradition, both the primordial man and woman were held to be equally blameful for the Fall of Man, and Eve was never seen as a temptress. Additionally, since God forgave them immediately, there is no doctrine of Original Sin in Islamic theology. Nev-

55. Q. 7:34.

56. Q. 2:35–39.

ertheless, they were exiled by God and this exile was applicable to all humanity for a set period of time. Human beings were promised guidance from God through prophets and messengers; they were given felicitations of the Garden, but, with a warning for those who rejected the message. This forged the link between this world (*dunyā*), where Adam, Eve and their progeny were exiled, and the Hereafter (*akhira*), where they are destined to return. This journey of the children of Adam comes to an end upon the Day of Judgment.

Life in this lower world is intricately linked with eschatology because an individual's conduct directly affects how they are judged by God after death. In connection with this, the Qur'an offers a comprehensive portrait of the human psyche that is interesting and unique. Human beings are recognized as the vice-regents of God on earth and they have been given this high position due to their rational abilities. They have also been given all good things for their sustenance and have been created in the best of molds. However, the human being is also portrayed in the Qur'an as a highly multifaceted and a deeply divided personality, who is in need of guidance and discipline. The human being is described as a mass of unruly and chaotic contradictions, torn between illusory desires that constantly change, such as passion, anger, greed, generosity, pettiness and piety. In addition to a human being's own internal passions, there is an external enemy, Satan, who deceives the steadfast soul towards forgetting God. Thus, because the human soul can be steadfast and patient in its belief, or prone to capriciousness with hypocrisy, it is described in the Qur'an as in need of constant guidance from God through His prophets and messengers, and it is only through this guidance that a human being can return to felicity.<sup>57</sup>

There is a well-known saying in Muslim literature that 'sleep is the brother of death' and many scholars have drawn an analogy between the resurrection after death and the awaking after dreaming. Moreover, just as dreaming can sometimes bring one closer to true reality than when one is awake, so too is death seen as an awakening to the reality and the removal of the veil. Hence, another popular saying in the Muslim world is 'people are asleep and when they die, they awaken.' Death, just like life in this world, is relative, rather than absolute, when compared to the Reality we know as God.<sup>58</sup> However, this does not mean that we Muslims do not feel the pain and sorrow when someone close to us dies. The best illustration of this is how the Prophet Muhammad grieved when his own son Ibrahim died at sixteen months of age; he showed his immense pain and sorrow through his

57. Q. 4:137, Q. 41:51. Q. 8:54

58. See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb dhikr al-mawt wa-mā ba'dahu*, trans. T. J. Winter as *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife: Book XL of The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1989, pp. 124 and 153–54.

tears. He is reported to have said, ‘O Ibrahim, were the truth not certain that the last of us will join the first, we would have mourned you even more than we do now [...] The eyes send their tears and the heart is saddened, but we do not say anything except that which pleases our Lord. Indeed, O Ibrahim, we are bereaved by your departure from us.’<sup>59</sup> When faced with death, it is common for Muslims to recite the Qur’anic verse, ‘To God we belong, and to Him is our return.’<sup>60</sup> In his work, ‘The Revival of the Religious Sciences’, the

famous scholar Al-Ghazali has written about how individual phases of life can be beneficial for the afterlife. The topic of afterlife has always been extremely important for Muslims because the promise of Paradise is specifically linked to their faith and good deeds in the world.<sup>61</sup> Life in this world is seen as a rehearsal stage for the Hour; a place where all individuals are tried and tested.



Nevertheless, while the believer is striving to attain Paradise, the Qur’an contains a reminder to not forget the present world: *‘But seek, with the (wealth) which God has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, [and do not] forget thy portion in this world, but do thou good, as God has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land; for God loves not those who do mischief.’*<sup>62</sup> Similarly, believers are encouraged to recite the prayer: *‘Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter.’*<sup>63</sup> The reason given for why one should not forget about this world and only focus on the Hereafter is that it is goodness from God, which deserves to be paid forward in this world through faith and good deeds. This life is therefore of great consequence—all actions and deeds matter and nothing is trivial either in life or in death. For the new Muslim it is also important to know that in the *Hadith* literature, it is made clear that praying for the dead, asking God’s forgiveness for them and giving charity on their behalf are some of the deeds that can benefit those who have passed on from the lower world. Another element of social etiquette in Islam that is related to this issue, is visiting the graves of the deceased. The Prophet Muhammad is well known for recommending this

59. Translation from Muhammad Husayn Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1994, p. 488.

60. Q. 2:156.

61. Q. 67:1–2.

62. Q. 28:77.

63. Q. 2:201.



by stating: “*So visit the graves, for they will remind you of death.*”<sup>64</sup> Once at a grave, it is recommended practice to recite the Qur’an and seek Allah’s forgiveness and mercy for the deceased. Many scholars have argued that people need to learn a lesson from going to graves; for instance, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alawī al-Ḥaddād wrote, “he should remember that soon he will go to the same end, and learn the lessons to be drawn from their condition.”<sup>65</sup>

Muslims are asked to believe in the *Barzakh*, which is also known as the life in the grave. It is an intermediate stage through which every individual passes after their life in this world (*dunyā*) and before their raising on the Day of Resurrection. *Barzakh* literally means ‘*isthmus*’, a narrow strip of land that forms a barrier between two seas. The meaning of this term has been derived from the following two verses of the Qur’an: “*It is He Who has let free the two bodies of flowing water: one palatable and sweet, and the other salt and bitter; yet has He made a barrier (barzakh) between them, a partition that is forbidden to be passed,*”<sup>66</sup> and, “*He has let free the two bodies of flowing water, meeting together. Between them is a barrier (barzakh) which they do not transgress.*”<sup>67</sup> The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) described life in the Intermediate Realm in the following terms: “*The grave is either one of the chasms of Hell or one of the gardens of Paradise*”, and “*When one of you dies his [future] seat is displayed before him morning and evening: should he be of the people of Paradise, then it is situated among them, while should he be of the people of Hell, then it is situated among them.*”<sup>68</sup> The most complete description of the events within the *Barzakh* is found in the Hadith literature and it always begins with the arrival of two interrogating angels named *Munkar* and *Nakīr*. All traditions agree that the two angels have been commanded by God to ask the deceased three questions in the grave: Who is your Lord? What is your religion? Who is your prophet? The correct answers to these are said to be Allah, Islam and Muhammad, and the righteous answer without hesitation. After hearing the deceased’s answers to these questions, the angels open a window either to Paradise (*Jannah*), whereupon the righteous may gaze and feel the atmosphere of felicity, or the angels may open one to the Fire (*Nār*).

64. Sunan Ibn Majah, Vol. 1, Book 6, Hadith 1572.

65. Abdullah Ibn Alawi Haddad, *The Lives of Man*, Louisville KY: Fons Vitea, 1991, p. 47.

66. Q. 25:53.

67. Q. 55:19–20.

68. Ghazālī, *Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife*, p. 127.



Although there is uncertainty about when the Hour will actually occur, there is no such ambiguity regarding what will occur at the end of the universe, during the Resurrection and on Judgment Day, because there are explicit descriptions of them in the Qur'an and Hadith. The subject is generally divided into events that will occur before the Hour (which are known as the 'Signs of the Hour') and those that come afterwards. After the arrival of the Hour, the approximate sequence of events is said to begin with the sounding of a trumpet followed by the destruction of the cosmos, resurrection and the final reckoning. Even though there are verses about the terrestrial signs of the Hour in the Qur'an, there are many more regarding God's cosmic undoing of the world before the Last Judgment. The topics of the actual destruction of the cosmos, the Resurrection, the Last Judgment and every individual being assigned a place for eternity in either Paradise or Hell are mentioned in detail in the Qur'an, and expanded accounts of these events are to be found in the Hadith literature and exegetical writings.

The Last Days before the arrival of the Hour (which is marked by the sounding of a trumpet) are primarily known as the *ashrāt al-Sā'a* or *ayāt al-Sā'a* (signs of the Hour). These signs are further divided into the minor signs, which mark the decay of society's moral order during the End of Days, and the greater signs, which are cataclysmic events that occur when the Hour is imminent. The ten major signs or tribulations (*fitan*) are smoke, al-dajjal, the beast, sunrise in the west, descent of Jesus (peace be upon him), Gog and Magog, three major earthquakes<sup>69</sup> and fire.<sup>70</sup> These cataclysmic events are dramatically and graphically described either in the Qur'an or in the Hadith literature, as the devastation of creation and as a complete reversal of the natural order.<sup>71</sup> These events are foreshadowed by widespread moral decay, whose description is found within the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, and are recognized by most Muslim scholars as signs indicating the onset of the cataclysmic events.

Judgment Day is referred to by various terms in the Qur'an, including the Day of Resurrection (*Yawm al-Qiyāma*), the Day of Judgment (*Yawm al-Dīn*), the Hour (*al-Sā'a*), the Last Day (*al-Yawm al-Ākhir*), the Day of Decision (*Yawm al-Faṣl*) and the Day of Reckoning (*Yawm al-Ḥisāb*). The call of the trumpet brings forth the total annihilation of everything created and another call of the trumpet brings forth the Day of Resurrection. On that day the Trumpet shall be blown by the Angel Isrāfīl and destruction will commence and when the Trumpet is blown the second time, all will be resurrected from their graves and enter an enormous plain. After

69. In some sources 'three lunar eclipses'.

70. The Qur'an mentions three of these: the smoke (45:10–2), the beast (27:82) and Gog and Magog (18:94, 21:96).

71. For example, see Q. 11:73, 17:99, 20:102, 23:101, 27:87, and 36:51.

the trumpet blast, some of the perilous events that follow are described by Ghazali as: ‘the Resurrection on the Day of Arising, the Presentation before the Almighty, the Inquisition regarding matters both important and minor, the Erection of the scales in order that men’s destinies might be known and the passage over the Traverse despite the fineness and sharpness of its edge. These things will be followed by the awaiting of the Summons to final judgment, either bliss or misery.’<sup>72</sup>

The Afterlife (or Hereafter) is in no way considered by Muslims to be equivalent to the lower world (*dunyā*). While it is certainly true that some importance is attached to the present life in Islamic literature (even when one lives this life in accordance with all of the tenets of faith), the central focus is always on the life to come. The primary sources of Islam, the Qur’an and the *Hadith* repeatedly state that life in this world is temporary, whereas, the real and everlasting life is that of the Hereafter.<sup>73</sup> The realm of Paradise and Hell is unobservable and is the part of the *‘Ālam al-Ghayb* (Unseen Realm); its location is unknown to anyone other than God. About Paradise, it is said in the Qur’an: ‘Now no person knows what delights of the eye are kept hidden (in reserve) for them as a reward for their (good) deeds.’<sup>74</sup> As for Hell, there are many descriptions of it in the Qur’an, and it is variously referred to there as, *al-Nār* (the Fire), *al-Jahannam* (*Gēhinnōm*<sup>75</sup>) and *al-Jaḥīm* (the Blazing Fire). In contrast to the fires of Hell that await sinners, those who believe, refrain from evil, perform good deeds, have God consciousness (*taqwa*) and are truthful, penitent and heedful they are promised the rewards of Paradise. Most frequently referred to as *al-Janna* (the Garden), Paradise is vividly described in the *Hadith* and, especially, in the Qur’an: ‘(Here is) a parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised: in it are rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink; and rivers of honey pure and clear. In it there are for them all kinds of fruits; and Grace from their Lord.’<sup>76</sup> This lasting home of the Hereafter is depicted as having both physical and spiritual delights and as a place where the faithful are contented, satisfied, at peace and secure. Here they will not hear any evil, they will not experience death, but rather feel true peace, hear gentle speech and, most of all, be in the presence of God.

72. Ghazālī, *Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife*, p. 173.

73. See for example, Q.57:20.

74. Q. 32:17.

75. A Hebrew eponym for Hell.

76. Q. 47:15.

## THE DIVINE DECREE

The last article of faith is the belief in God's decree (*qadar*). Muslims believe that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has power over everything. All that happens is according to His Will, thus nothing is supernatural or random. However, Muslims are not fatalistic, they are given free will and enjoined to strive to do their best in all situations, since human beings do not know where their destiny lies. Thus, they must exhaust all possible means and when the inevitable occurs (good or bad) it is to be taken with patience and trusting acceptance of the Infinite Wisdom of Allah.<sup>77</sup> The most appropriate translation of *qadar* is, 'divine decree', other Arabic terms used to refer to this decree are, '*taqdir*' (determination of measurement) and '*al-qada wa'l-qadar*' (divine will and divine decree). The problem of understanding the true meaning of *qadar* arises when the human intellect considers any of the components of the divine decree within a timeline. *Predestination* and *fate* are inappropriate terms in this context because God is recognized as being the Creator of space and time and yet He is not bound by them. Consequently, God's divine decree is not bound by these limited conceptions. The notion of predestination somehow considers God's knowledge, power and will within the confines of time and space. Furthermore, the concept of fate makes one believe that the human being is totally devoid of free will, because one's actions would be determined in advance by an impersonal force.

It is recognized that there is a limit to how much human beings can understand about this article of faith. Simply said, Allah is the sole and absolute Creator of all human actions, as well as the Creator of the power (*qudra*) and choice (*ikhtiyār*) acquired and exercised by human beings. Hence, all actions, be they recognized as good or evil, are the creation of Allah, but although action, power and choice are created by Allah, it is the human being who acquires the act, and for that they are held responsible. This theory of acquisition (*kasb*) is inferred from the Qur'an and according to it, human beings only *perform* an action, whereas, the action is in fact created by Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. Thus, Allah alone is recognized as the Creator Who determines, through a created power (*qudra*), the individ-



77. For further detailed information on the Messengers/Prophets of God please see Amjad M. Hussain, *The Muslim Creed: A Contemporary Study of Theology*, Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 2016, pp. 242-279.



ual existence of each act in all its particulars. Yet this act is created in order to be acquired and performed by a creature, so it cannot be seen as God's own act. In other words, one could not say that God is responsible for it, but rather that the person who performed the act is responsible. According to the Qur'an there is no doubt that Allah is the Creator of everything, and that as far as any action exists, it is a created 'thing'. It is important for the new Muslim to understand that human beings have been created with a natural dis-

position (*fitrah*), an intellect, a capacity of willing, the ability of thinking, judging and choosing, along with the power to distinguish between what is right and wrong. Therefore, people have the ability to act and they possess the freedom of choice (*ikhtiyār*). It is this choice, and acting on this choice, that human beings are responsible for in their individual and communal life.

God's willing or creating an evil action cannot be seen as repugnant to His wisdom, because, He wills it in accordance with an individual's exercise of free choice. There are clear demarcations of evil deeds that are prohibited in Islam, but it is recognized that individuals have the autonomy to commit a sin. Hence, even though sins are in accordance with what is created by the divine, this does not indicate that these actions are in any way in accordance with divine guidance or pleasure. These actions are recognized as breaching the *Shari'ah* and so an individual is held accountable for his acquisition and performance of the act in question through his free will. Imam Ṭaḥāwī wrote, "All will act in accordance with their design and are moving inexorably toward the purpose for which they were created. Welfare and affliction, good and evil are determined for everyone. The [divine enablement] that an act requires, for example, an act of obedience, which cannot be attributed to a creature, occurs concurrent with the act. As for the [material] enablement that results from health, capacity, poise and sound means, it precedes the act. In sacred law, it is upon the latter that legal and moral obligation hinge, just as God, the Sublime and Exalted, states; '*God obliges no soul with more than its capacity*' (*Qur'an* 2:228). Human actions are God's creations but humanity's acquisitions."

Although one can state the various creeds regarding the divine decree, and the place of human responsibility in relation to it, due to the complex reality of '*Qadar*' the only true unveiling of it comes from living with trust in Allah's providence (*tawakkul*), which will enlighten the believer in such a way that he or she



will recognize that there is no power but Allah.<sup>78</sup> It is also important for the new Muslim to understand the notion of why evil or harmful things exist. The question of perceived injustice by anyone is either a lack of the full understanding of the situation at hand by the people themselves, or, it is simply the act of a moral evil, which is always carried out in violation of the divine command. This violation is due to the human being's ability to acquire and perform such actions as his or her own. After all, creation is a testing ground for faith, and harmful and malevolent situations exist as a means to acquire knowledge about the hereafter; in addition such situations also serve the purpose for the justification for a Judgment Day and a life in the hereafter. However, it is important to recognize that human beings act in accordance with their own will, notwithstanding the fact that a person's will is ultimately determined by divine decree.<sup>79</sup>

The new Muslim needs to appreciate that Islam teaches us that our task is to make a sincere effort, to strive to do the best in any act and choice; for a human being does not know and cannot know wherein his or her destiny lies, and until he or she has exhausted all possible means with regards to what will inevitably take place, we cannot say that we have encountered our destiny. However, whatever then comes after all efforts have been made, should be received with patience and trusting acceptance of what He in His Infinite Wisdom has seen fit to send, and with the expectation that it may prove to be a source of good and ultimate blessing in the broader perspective of the life to come. Belief in the divine decree is, thus, a statement of belief in the meaningfulness and purposefulness of all that it is, an essential part of the Muslim's sense of total trust, dependence and submission in relation to his Creator. Thus, the divine decree can only be understood by living with trust in Allah; to understand the greater purpose of harmful substances in life and to have patience with everything that one encounters in this life.

78. Ghazālī, *Faith in Divine Unity*, p. 43.

79. Ibid., p. 38.





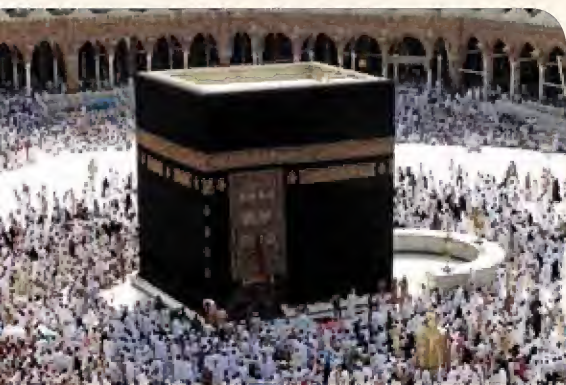


## THE FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM: THE FIVE PILLARS

## THE FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM: THE FIVE PILLARS

The Muslims' most important task is to initially get to know and worship (*ibādah*) Allah, the Almighty; Who created them, gave them life and someday will take their lives and then resurrect them. Therefore, the Muslims should accept Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, as the greatest power and the highest authority in their lives. The Lexical meaning of, '*ibādah*' is, to submit, to obey, to worship and to adore. In Islam all types of deeds carried out with the intention to gain Allah's Pleasure, to turn towards Allah, to establish an intrinsic relationship with Him, to be close to Him is considered *ibādah*; every command of His obeyed and every prohibition of His avoided, is deemed within the context of worship. It is possible to classify worship structurally under two categories: the first category consists of all kinds of work, activities and behavior performed to obey Allah's commands and gain His pleasure. Acts such as, working and gaining a livelihood through lawful ways, performing one's tasks in the best way possible, treating people nicely and graciously, protecting chastity, avoiding harmful habits, trying to prevent and annihilate the things that are harmful to society, protecting the environment, not littering, helping the poor and the needy, staying away from the religiously unacceptable and bad behaviors, are all recognized as worship. The second category of worship is more specific, and in this sense, worship refers to the practices that are performed in accordance with certain rituals, rules and order. Although there are many acts of worship (*ibādah*) in Islam, the five main obligatory acts of worship are called the, 'Five Pillars of Islam'. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings

of Allah be upon him) said, "*The structure of Islam is built on five (pillars): Testification of 'La ilaha illallah' (none has the right to be worshipped but Allah), that Muhammad is his slave and Messenger, the establishment of Salat, the payment of Zakat, the pilgrimage to the House of Allah (Kabah), and Saum during the month of Ramadan.*"<sup>80</sup> In this Hadith the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) gave a parable of the house of Islam which consists of five foundations or pillars. The first pillar is the declaration of faith



80. Riyadh as-Salihin, Book 9, Hadith 217.

(*shahada*) which states, “I testify that there is no deity but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”. The second pillar is the prescribed daily prayers (*salah*), the third pillar is fasting during the month of Ramadan (*siyam*), the fourth pillar is giving alms (*zakah*) and the last pillar of Islam is to undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*).

At this juncture the new Muslim should appreciate the reason why he or she is obliged to worship Allah. The main and foremost aim of performing any act of worship is to be able to remember and glorify Allah, Most High; it is vital to understand that God’s majesty and glory does not depend in the slightest degree upon the praise and worship of human beings or any of His creation, rather, He is absolutely free of all such need. Instead, it is the human being who needs the recurrent forms of worship, so as to strengthen and solidify his or her faith and submission to God. By worshipping Allah, the human being gets to know Him as the Lord, has the opportunity to achieve His pleasure and through that gain Paradise. Therefore, the essence of Islam is total submission and obedience to Allah. The acts of worship referred to as the ‘pillars of Islam’, are obligatory upon all Muslims wherever they may live; these acts of worship have been specifically prescribed in the Qur’an and they are executed in the manner that the Prophet Muhammad performed them. It is stated in the Holy Qur’an that Allah created the human beings and the jinn to worship Him (al-Dhariyat, 51: 56); and consequently, to test which one of them is the best in deeds (al-Mulk, 67: 2). In this respect ‘*ibādah*’ in its widest sense means to live in accordance with the Divine Will and Pleasure, to obey the religious rules and values, and to maintain the relationship and the connection with Allah. According to this understanding, ‘*ibādah*’ does not only consist of some limited practices that are carried out at certain times and places, but, instead it is a way of understanding life making it meaningful.

Before continuing any further it is important to mention two very significant details. Firstly, achieving the status of worship for a particular action or behavior depends on the performance of said action or behavior in accordance with the rules established by Allah and, with the intention and thought to obey Him and to gain His pleasure. People cannot establish a style or model of worship in accordance with their own desires and thoughts. The limits and models of right and wrong or, licit and illicit have been established by Allah, may He be glorified and exalted; these limits and models have been transmitted to us from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). He implemented and practiced these rules of worship in his life and became the best example for us.

Secondly, it is important for the new Muslim to be familiar with the subject of, ‘*Fiqh*’, which is a discipline of Islamic knowledge that encompasses the religious

and legal aspects of every individual's life, their relationship with each other, as well as, with Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. After the Prophet (peace be upon him) passed on, the most prominent of his companions took on the task of issuing rulings and judgments regarding the problems of Muslim society. They were very proficient in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and due to having the privilege of spending time with the Prophet himself, they knew the details and the purpose of every ruling. The Muslim scholars of law of the following generations followed these directions of the companions of the Prophet. Evidently, not every Muslim was expected to be able to deduct the religious rulings from the sources, so the Muslims were invited to, "*Ask the people of knowledge, if you know not.*"<sup>81</sup> Due to the differences in the conventional opinions regarding the understanding of legal aspects since the companions' time, a number of schools of Islamic law (*madhab al-fiqhiyya*) developed. Presently there are four Sunni schools of law known as Hanafi, Shafi'i, Hanbali and Maliki; the majority of the Sunni Muslims living worldwide follow one of these four Sunni *madhaib*, which in most cases are very similar. Generally speaking a Muslim chooses to follow one of the four schools of law mentioned above and performs his or her acts of worship and deeds according to the exposition of their chosen *madhab*. It is important to bear in mind that a Muslim is free to change his or her *madhab*, however, once a change has been made, it is obligatory on the person in question, to learn the religious rulings of their newly chosen *madhab* in order to be able to perform worship and other duties in the correct manner. Moreover, Muslims are allowed to follow a ruling from another school of law when their own school of law does not provide an adequate answer or solution regarding a particular matter. This is permitted only in an essential and exceptional situation and it should be noted that such undertaking cannot be arbitrary. The aspects of worship mentioned below are mostly based upon Maliki *fiqh*, but at times, other schools of law are also mentioned.

## SHAHADA

*Shahada* is an Arabic word which means, 'to testify' or 'to witness'. The *Shahada* is the first act of worship whereby the believer believes with his or her heart and declares with his or her tongue, the testimony of faith. The *shahada* consists of these words, "I testify that there is no deity except God, and I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God". The first statement of *shahada* manifests that, "there is no deity except Allah." It is necessary to declare or accept the *shahada* at least once in a lifetime to be a Muslim. It is the statement that every person utters when he or she becomes a Muslim; it is further stated numerous times through various rit-

81. Q. 16: 43



uals of worship, such as, the formal prayers. The first part of this statement is known as ‘*tawhīd*’, which lexically means, unification or causing to become one, technically, it refers to the acceptance of Allah as the only exalted authority. Allah is the only One, the Absolute and the Almighty; Who is the Owner and Creator of everything and Who cannot be compared to anyone. Allah is the only One Who is worthy of being worshipped; there is no one that is equal, similar, or partner to Allah. The second part of the *shahada* is a proclamation of accepting Muhammad as the Messenger of God and it is simultaneously an acceptance of the fact that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is the guide of humanity –the final and complete guide for all of humanity- and that the person stating the *shahada* intends to faithfully follow his guidance.



## SALAH

The second act of worship which is prescribed in Islam is the performance of the five daily prayers (*salah*). In the Qur'an, the Arabic word “*salah*” terminologically means to demonstrate servitude to God by means of certain acts. By performing this ritual prayer, the Muslims remember their Lord, express their love and respect for Him, and invoke and strive to express their gratitude to Him. It is vital for the new Muslim to know that the ritual prayer is obligatory upon every sane and pubescent Muslim. It is stated in the Qur'an, “*Recite that which has been revealed to you of the Book and keep up the prayer. Surely prayer keeps away indecency and evil.*”<sup>82</sup> One day the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) asked his Companions, “*If there was a river by the door of anyone of your houses and he took a bath in it five times a day, would there remain any dirt?*” When they answered, “No”, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) stated, “*That is the example of the five daily prayers with which Allah blots out evil deeds.*”<sup>83</sup> Thus, these five time prayers during the day and night keep for the Muslim clear, the perspective of who he or she is in relation to Almighty God. It is important for the new Muslim to be aware that no matter how faithful and conscientious an individual is, such reminders as the *salah* are essential, so as not to lose sight of one's relationship with Allah and one's responsibilities and to remember the ultimate purpose of

82. Q. 29: 45.

83. Sahih al-Bukhari, Mawaqit, 6.



one's life. Moreover, the daily prayers accustom a person to gratitude, move them closer to Allah, help them gain *thawab* (spiritual reward) and create an avenue of redemption for minor sins. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, *"Five daily prayers and Friday prayer, from one Friday to the next, are expiation for the sins committed between them, so long as one does not commit any major sin."*<sup>84</sup> It has been argued by many scholars that the closest moment of the servant to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, in

this world, is the position of prostration during the ritual prayer. The peace and tranquility gained by performing the ritual prayer cannot be obtained by any other means of worship. However, this does not negate the fact that the regular performance of the five daily ritual prayers may become a difficult act for many people. In fact it is expressed in our Sacred Book that, 'prayer indeed is a hard thing for all but those who hope to turn to Allah and are humble in spirit'.<sup>85</sup> This is the reason why from all the acts of worship in Islam, ritual prayer is the most important and rewarding one. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said aptly, *"The prayer is the pillar of religion"*<sup>86</sup> Therefore, be steadfast and patient with regards to the daily prayers.

A Muslim is required to pray at the prescribed times wherever he or she may be –at home, work, school etcetera- but it is preferable to pray in a congregation at the Mosque. Just as performing a ritual prayer before its prescribed time is not accepted, it is also a great sin to delay the ritual prayer without a legitimate excuse, until after its appointed time. It is stated in the Qur'an, *"Verily, the (ritual) prayer is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours."*<sup>87</sup> The prescribed time of the Dawn Prayer begins at dawn and continues until sunrise. The time of the Afternoon and the Friday prayer begins when the sun crosses the meridian and continues until the shadow of an object becomes twice as much as the length of its height. The time of the Late Afternoon Prayer begins with the end of the time of the Afternoon prayer and continues until sunset. The appointed time of the Evening Prayer begins with sunset and continues until the reddish afterglow on the western horizon disappears and finally, the time of the Night Prayer begins with the end of the Evening prayer and continues until dawn. Every prayer is comprised of *takbīr*, *tawhīd* (expression

84. Sahih Muslim, Taharah, 14-15.

85. Q. 2: 45

86. Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Iman, 8.

87. Q. 4: 103.

of oneness of God), *tasbīh* (glorification of Allah), *ḥamd* (praise) *shukr* (expressing gratitude), humbleness, supplication and invocation for all the believers, and the sending of blessings (*ṣalawāt*) upon the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).

Before we go through the acts of the prayer in detail, it is important for the new Muslim to appreciate the rules of cleanliness with regards to Islam in general. To perform prayer and any other major religious rituals, such as, reciting the Qur'an from the *ṣuḥuf*, it is necessary to be cleansed from legal impurities called '*hadath*', in other words, the state of major (*janāba*) or minor impurity. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "*The prayer of a person who breaks his minor ablution is not accepted till he performs the ablution.*"<sup>88</sup> If the person who is intending to perform the ritual prayer has material impurity on his body, on his clothes, or in the place of worship in a quantity that prevents the performance of the ritual prayer then it is compulsory for him to purify that impurity.<sup>89</sup> After cleaning it is important to make sure that one is dressed properly (*satr al-awra*). That means to cover the parts of the body that are required to be covered for the performance of the ritual prayer. It is obligatory for men to cover the area between the navel and the knees. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) stated: "*Awra of man is between his navel and his knees.*"<sup>90</sup> Whereas women are obliged to cover their entire body except their hands, face and feet.<sup>91</sup> The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) also said, "*Cleanliness is half of faith.*"<sup>92</sup> Cleanliness has a vital importance for the individual and for the society as a whole. According to Islam, it is necessary to clean one-self from both material impurities, and false beliefs and thoughts. The requirements of the minor ablution and major ablution in order to purify one-self from *janāba* (major ritual impurity), paying attention to washing hands before and after eating etcetera are all examples that act to demonstrate the vital place of cleanliness in Islam. Allah Almighty praises those who clean themselves from material and spiritual impurities: "...*Surely Allah loves those who turn to Him, and He*

88. Sahih al-Bukhari, Wudu, 2.

89. *Najash* (material impurities) are categorized under two groups in terms of their influence to obstruct the ritual prayer: 1. Strong or heavy *najasah* (*najasah ghaliza*) is the material impurity that has conclusive religious evidence in the Qur'an or the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). Human blood, urine, feces, and alcoholic drinks are the examples of such strong *najasah*. If the solid types of such impurities cover an area bigger than a watermelon seed, and if the liquid ones cover an area bigger than the palm, then the ritual prayer becomes invalid. 2. Light *najasah* (*najasah khafifa*) is the material impurity that does not have conclusive religious evidence in the Qur'an or the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). Urine and feces of the animals whose meat is edible according to Islamic law such as sheep, cow and deer are accepted as light *najasah*. The performance of the ritual prayer is obstructed if the light *najasah* covers one fourth of the cloth or a limb.

90. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, v. II, 187. It is recommended to wear tops that cover the shoulders.

91. According to the Shafi'i School of law, women should cover their feet as well.

92. Sahih Muslim, Taharah, 1

loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.”<sup>93</sup> and “...Allah loves those who purify themselves.”<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, our Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “*Surely Allah is clean, and He loves cleanliness.*”<sup>95</sup> Cleaning the material and spiritual impurities of one’s personal sphere is substantial for performing the acts of worship. ‘*Tahara*’, in other words, cleansing oneself from material impurities called, ‘*najash*’, and cleansing oneself from spiritual impurities called, ‘*hadath*’, which prevent a person from performing the acts of worship, are conditions to performing the ritual prayer (*salah*) and certain other acts of worship.

Purity of the body means removing from the body all kinds of dirt and impurities; it is the most important factor in keeping human beings healthy. Cleaning and caring for one’s hair, shaving the armpits and pubic hairs, clipping the nails, brushing the teeth, washing one’s hands and mouth before and after meals and taking a shower are all included in the concept of the purity of the body. The New Muslims should be aware that dental hygiene was very important for the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). He is reported to have said, “*If I knew that I would not over-burden the believers, I would have ordered them to use miswāq (i.e. a stick for brushing the teeth) before every prayer.*”<sup>96</sup> In order to perform the ritual prayers (*salah*) and certain other acts of worship, one must appear clean in front of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. In the following verse Allah Almighty commands the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and all the Muslims to implement material and spiritual purity, “*And your garments do purify, and uncleanness do shun*”<sup>97</sup> It is important to recognize the implication of such a command. By extension such cleanliness means keeping the houses we live in, the schools, the offices, the streets, the parks, the nature and all other places around us clean.

Therefore it is necessary to observe the physical purification of your body and clothes for the ablution to be valid, for the performance of the acts of worship that necessitate ablution. Another very important detail to bear in mind that is related to the topic of cleanliness and purity is that, while in the restroom it is vital to not splash urine around and be careful not to contaminate (*najash*) the clothes one is wearing. Therefore, it is recommended that one should urinate in a sitting position and avoid urinating standing up without a valid excuse. It is reprehensible to urinate upwind, in still or running water, into insect nests, in places where people usually sit and at roads where people pass. Muslims are asked to clean the private parts of the body after urinating or defecating with water, which is called ‘*istinja*;

93. Q. 2: 222.

94. Q. 9: 108.

95. Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Adab, 2950.

96. Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Taharah, 23.

97. Q. 74: 4-5.



for men it is important to make sure the urine stops completely before the *istinja* is performed. This act is referred to as, '*istibra*'. *Istibra* can be achieved by engaging in certain movements, such as, moving a little, walking, coughing etc. It is also important to note that since Muslims perform all clean acts and good deeds with the right hand, it is Sunnah to do the cleansing acts of *istinja* and *istibra* with the left hand.

The human state that prevents the performance of the spiritual acts of worship and is considered a legal impurity is called, '*hadath*'. It is divided into two categories of minor and major *hadath*. The Minor *hadath* is the kind that comes into being when a situation nullifying the state of minor purity takes place; this type of *hadath* can be removed by performing the minor ablution (*wudu*). The major *hadath* is the type that comes into being when a situation nullifying the state of major purity takes place, such as, emission of sexual discharge (*janāba*), menses (*ḥayd*) and post-natal bleeding (*nifas*).<sup>98</sup> This *hadath* is removed by performing the major ablution (*ghusl*). In other words, the major ablution means washing the entire body without leaving any part dry, with the intention of undertaking the major ablution. Allah Almighty says in the Qur'an, "*O you who believe! If you are in a state of janāba (under an obligation to perform a major ablution), then purify yourselves...*"<sup>99</sup> Moreover, it is also recommended for Muslims to perform the major ablution on certain other occasions, such as, to bath or shower for the Friday and the festival prayers, before getting into the state of *ihram* for major (*hajj*) and minor pilgrimage (*umrah*) and for the ritual standing (*waqfa*) on the day of Arafah etcetera.<sup>100</sup> There are a number of prohibited or impermissible actions for the one who needs to perform *Ghusl*, such as, performing the ritual prayer, the prostration of recitation, entering a mosque, performing *itikaf*, circumambulating around the Kaba



98. It's applied to end the state of *ḥayd* (menstruation) and *nifas* (postnatal bleeding). *Nifas* is the postnatal bleeding after giving childbirth and it is designated as the state of *hadath* (judicial impurity) due to this bleeding. There is no minimum duration for postnatal bleeding, while the maximum duration is forty full days (sixty days according to the Shafi'i School of Law).

99. Q. 5: 6.

100. According to the Hanafi School of Law (*madhab*) there are three obligatory acts of major ablution, rinsing the mouth with plenty of water, drawing water to the nose and cleaning it and washing the entire body without leaving any part dry. According to the Shafi'i School of Law, the intention for major ablution and washing the entire body are obligatory. If there is any material impurity on the body, it is necessary to clean it. It is only recommended to clean the mouth and nose, because mouth and nose are accepted as inner parts of the body by the Shafi'i School of Law.



and touching a copy of the Qur'an or a verse from the copy of the Qur'an. At this point it is also important to mention certain details relating to women and the concept of cleanliness and purity. A woman who is having menstruation or postnatal bleeding is not permitted to perform the ritual prayer, fast or have sexual intercourse with her husband. It is not necessary for women to make up for the ritual prayers that could not be performed during menstruation and the postnatal period; however, it is obligatory to make up the fasting for the days of Ramadan that could not be observed.

One who intends to perform the major ablution, commences the act by stating *aūdhu* and *basmala* (*bismillah Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahem* -In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate), he or she then expresses the intention to perform major ablution in order to be cleansed from major impurity for the sake of Allah (by saying: I intend to perform major ablution for the sake of Allah). This is followed by the private parts and the hands being washed and the impurities of the body being removed if there are any. This is followed by the performance of the minor ablution. During this process water is drawn to the mouth and nose. Those who are fasting should be careful not to swallow any water. After performing the minor ablution, water is poured on the body ensuring that no part of the body is left dry. It is important to note that according to the Hanafi School of Law, the major ablution negates the need to perform the minor ablution afterwards i.e. once the major ablution has been performed, it is enough to clean and purify the body and there is no need to follow this action with the performance of the minor ablution. The minor ablution means washing and wiping specific parts of the body with the intention to worship. Minor ablution is not merely a method of cleansing oneself physically, but it is also deemed an act of *ibādah* itself, in the sense that the Muslim is following a command of Allah by making *wudu* before performing acts of worship. Performing the minor ablution assists the person in gaining spiritual rewards (*thawab*); it is conducive to receiving forgiveness for certain sins. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) expressed this point in his following sayings, "*He who performs minor ablution like me, his previous sins would be expiated*"<sup>101</sup> and "*If a Muslim performs ablution and does it well and offers prayer, all his sins during the period from one prayer to another would be pardoned by Allah.*"<sup>102</sup> Performing the minor ablution is a requirement for performing the ritual prayers, executing the prostration of recitation, circumambulating around the Kaba, and touching the copy of the Qur'an. The obligatory acts of minor ablution are stated in the following verse of the Qur'an, "*O you who believe! When you rise up to (perform) prayer, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads and (wash)*

101. Sahih Muslim, Taharah, 8.

102. Sahih Muslim, Taharah, 6.

*your feet up to the ankles...*'<sup>103</sup> There are four obligatory acts of the minor ablution, washing the face once (from the hair of the forehead to the lower part of the chin, and across from one ear to the other), washing the hands and the arms from fingertips up to the elbows (including the elbows) once, wiping one fourth of the head and washing both feet up to the ankles once. The recommended acts of the minor ablution are to make the intention for performing minor ablution,<sup>104</sup> reciting *aūdhu* and *basmala* at the beginning of the ablution, washing the hands three times, rinsing the mouth three times (*madmada*) and drawing water into the nostrils thrice (*istinshaq*). This is followed by washing the face and arms thrice. Then ending the ablution by wiping the whole head, wiping the ears once and washing one's feet once. According to the Maliki *fiqh* it is recommended to observe the sequence of order when washing the limbs during the minor ablution, whereas, according to the Shafi'i *fiqh* it is obligatory.

Such acts that nullify the minor ablution are for example urinating, defecating, or breaking wind, emission of semen (*mani*) and preseminal fluid (*madhi*), vomiting, a flow of blood, pus, or yellow matter from any part of the body, losing consciousness and sleeping while lying down or leaning. Whereas blood or yellow matter that exits the wound but does not spread, sign of blood from the teeth, weeping and shedding tears, vomiting less than a mouthful, and sleeping while sitting are states that do not nullify the minor ablution.

The new Muslim should be aware that in the case that there is no water available to perform ablution, or when it is not possible to use water, then '*tayammum*' is performed with clean earth or something similar to earth. It is performed simply by wiping the face and the arms with the intention of cleansing oneself from *hadath*. *Tayammum* can also be performed by striking objects where there is trace of dust, with the palms of one's hands.<sup>105</sup> Once ablution has been performed, the Muslim is ready to commence the ritual prayer.

First of all, the new Muslim is required to turn towards the *qibla*, i.e. the direction of Mecca; generally a prayer compass is used to determine the correct direction of the *qibla*. However, if an error is made concerning the accuracy of the direction, any error of only 45 degrees towards the right or towards the left is not considered a deflection from the *qibla* and the prayer is accepted. After facing the *qibla* the Muslim is required to make the intention for *salah*; this is carried out by stating which prayer is to be performed and intending full heartedly to perform that worship for the sake of Allah. There are three times of the day during which the

103. Q. 5: 6.

104. Intention is obligatory according to the Shafi'i, Maliki and Hanbali Schools of Law.

105. According to the Shafi'i School of Law, it can only be performed with earth.



performance of the ritual prayer is strongly reprehensible (*makruh tahrimi*), these times are, during sunrise, at the time when the sun reaches at the meridian and during sunset. It is important for the new Muslim to know that during the above mentioned three times of the day, it is also prohibited to make up any lost prayers. One Hadith reports, “*There were three times at which Allah’s Messenger forbade us to pray, or bury our dead: When the sun begins to rise till it is fully up, when the sun is at its height at midday till it passes*

*over the meridian, and when the sun draws near to setting till it sets.*”<sup>106</sup>

Generally, all the ritual prayers have similarities in terms of how they are performed; to demonstrate here the author will use the example of the Sunnah cycles (*rakah*) of the dawn prayer, performed before the obligatory cycles. The intention should be clearly expressed by saying “I intend to perform the Sunnah cycles of today’s dawn prayer.” The intention that is sincerely expressed by the heart can be uttered in any language. However, the rest of the prayer has to be performed in Arabic; it is important to note that parts of the Qur’an<sup>107</sup> are recited as an essential portion of the prayer and this is repeated in every unit of the prayer. It usually does not take much time for an individual to learn and memorize *Surah Fatiha*, a very short *Surah* of seven verses, and most of the Arabic words and phrases detailed below. According to Abu Hanifa, until the individual is able to memorize these words, the revert should be able to either follow a congregation at best or recite the prayer in his or her own language for a limited short time. It is important to note that reciting the *salah* in one’s own language is not an alternative or long term solution, in fact a new Muslim is obliged to memorize the Arabic terminology as soon as possible. However, he or she is free to learn the Arabic terms and phrases from Latin transliteration and learn the meaning of these Arabic words in their own language.

While saying the opening *takbir* (*Allahu Akbar*) the men raise their hands up to the level of the earlobes and the women raise them to the shoulder level; both genders turning their palms towards the direction of Mecca. All this is carried out while in *Qiyam* (standing) in the prayer. *Qiyam* is obligatory during the Sunnah cycles, all the obligatory (*fard*) and the necessary (*wajib*) ritual prayers. It is stated

106. Sahih Muslim, Musafirun, 293. According to the Shafi’i School of Law, prayers which take place before the obligatory ritual prayers such as the make-up prayers, and *tahiyat al-masjid* (the prayer to salute the mosque) can be performed during the reprehensible times.

107. Surah Fatiha

in the verse: “...and stand before Allah with devotion.”<sup>108</sup> While standing the men grip the left wrist with the thumb and the little finger of the right hand; they put the other fingers of the right hand on the left wrist and hold the hand at the navel level. Women hold their hands in a similar manner to men but instead of holding them at the navel, they place their hands on their chests. One is required to look at the place of prostration while standing during the prayer. Feet should be kept in line with the shoulders and there should be a space between the two feet. After saying *takbir* and clasping the hands in *qiyam*, one recites the invocation of *Subhanaka*, followed by the recitation of *basmala* and chapter of the Qur’an named, ‘*al-Fatiha*’.<sup>109</sup> The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated: “One is not credited with having observed the prayer without the recitation.”<sup>110</sup> Following the recitation of *al-Fatiha* the Muslim says “*Amin*” and continues by reciting another section from the Qur’an; this can either be a complete *surah*, three short verses, or a long verse the equivalent of a line from the Qur’an. This is called, ‘*damm al-surah*’ (additional chapter). The person who is worshipping then bends down to *ruku* by gripping his or her knees and saying “*Allahu Akbar*”. Men keep their backs straight during *ruku*, whereas, women are not required to bend down so much. The worshiper then says, “*Subhana Rabbi al-Azim*”, at least three times while in the position of *ruku* and then stands up straight by saying, “*Sami Allahu li man Hamidah*”. While standing he or she says, “*Rabbana laka al-Hamd*”, which is followed by the statement of “*Allahu Akbar*” and the performance of the prostration (*sajdah*). Allah has stated in the Qur’an, “O you who believe! Bow down and prostrate.”<sup>111</sup> Therefore, the *Sajda (Prostration)*, an obligatory act of the ritual prayer, is followed after the act of bowing down. Muslims prostrate twice in each cycle of the ritual prayer. The prostration is performed by placing seven limbs on the floor. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) stated, “*I have been ordered to prostrate on seven bones. Those are the forehead along with the tip of the nose*”, then the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) proceeded to point towards his nose, both hands, both knees and the toes of both feet.<sup>112</sup> Prostration can be prolonged during the supererogatory prayers. It is stated in a hadith: “*The nearest a servant comes to his Lord is when he is prostrating*

108. Q. 2:238. Those who cannot stay standing may perform the prayer by sitting or by gestures. Those who fall ill while praying the ritual prayer may continue the prayer by sitting.

109. According to Hanafi School of law it is not necessary to recite it for the person who performs the ritual prayer in the congregation behind an Imam. The Prophet (pbuh) said: “*Whoever has an Imam, the recitation of the Imam is his recitation.*”

110. Muslim, *Salat*, 42. The recitation in the obligatory cycles of the afternoon and the late afternoon prayers is not performed out loud by oneself or in congregation. When the evening and the night prayers are performed in the congregation, the recitation is performed with a loud voice, and those who perform it individually can recite them with a light sound loud enough to hear oneself.

111. Q. 22: 77.

112. Sahih al-Bukhari, *Adhan*, 133.



himself, so make supplication (in this state).”<sup>113</sup> The Muslim says, “*Subhana Rabbi al-‘Ala*”, three times while in the position of prostration. Then he or she says, “*Allahu Akbar*”, lifts his or her head from prostration and stays seated for long enough to say, “*Subhanallah*.” While in this seated position, the worshipers turn their right toe towards the *qibla*, keep their right foot straight, sit on their left foot and place their hands upon their knees. This is followed by reciting, “*Allahu Akbar*”, once again and prostrating for a second time; the words “*Subhana Rabbi al-‘Ala*” are recited three times again while in prostration and then the worshiper stands up by saying “*Allahu Akbar*”. In the second cycle, the *basmala* is recited while standing, proceeded by the recitation of the chapter of *al-Fatiha* and an additional section from the Qur’an. Then the worshiper bows down by saying “*Allahu Akbar*” and proceeds to perform the *ruku* and the prostrations as in the first cycle. In this cycle after the second prostration, the Muslim sits in the same manner in which he or she does between the two prostrations. This is *the Final Sitting (Qa’dah al-Akhirah)* and it is obligatory in order to end the ritual prayer. During this sitting the invocation of *tahiyyat* is recited followed by the invocations of *Allahumma Salli, Allahumma Bariq*, and *Rabbana Atina*. Finally, the greetings of *salam* first to the right and then to the left are uttered by saying each time, “*al-Salam ‘alaykum wa Rahmatullah*”. This brings the *rakah* of the *salah* to completion. The obligatory part of the dawn prayer consists of two cycles which are performed in the same manner as the Sunnah cycle. It is important for new Muslims to know that it is reported that believers who perform their ritual prayers in congregation gain more spiritual reward than those who perform it individually. Our Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) gave us the following glad tidings, “*The prayer in congregation is twenty seven times superior to the prayer offered by a person alone*.”<sup>114</sup> It is also important to note that the Friday and the Festival prayers can only be performed in congregation.<sup>115</sup>

It is helpful for the new Muslims to familiarize themselves with how the ritual prayer is performed in a congregation. First of all, the Imam reminds the congregation to line up properly, in close ranks and turns towards the direction of Mecca. It is important to bear in mind that while falling into line it is enough if the shoulders and the feet of a person are parallel to the shoulders and the feet of other worshipers; it is not obligatory or necessary for the shoulders and the feet of the individual to literally touch the shoulders and feet of other people. All those who are in the congregation state their intention by saying, “I intend to perform the obligatory cycles of today’s ... prayer and to follow the Imam”. The invocation of *Subhanaka*

113. Sahih Muslim, Salat, 215.

114. Sahih al-Bukhari, Adhan, 30; Muslim, Masajid, 42.

115. According to the Shafi’i School of Law, the Festival prayers can be performed individually, while there should be at least forty people to perform the Friday prayer.



is recited. The Imam recites both *aūdhu* and *basmala* silently or aloud;<sup>116</sup> this is followed by the recitation of the chapter of al-Fatiha and an additional chapter of the Qur'an out loud, during the evening, the night and the dawn prayers, and, silently, during the afternoon and late afternoon prayers. The congregation stands quietly without any loud recitation, because the recitation of the Imam is deemed the recitation of the congregation. However, according to the Shafi'i *fiqh* the congregation is required to recite the chapter of al-Fatiha in each cycle.



At the end of a congregational prayer or individual ritual prayer the invocation (*dua'*) is read. This is truly the essence of worship. Allah is close to those who express invocations heartily and He accepts their invocations; *"And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near, I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me..."*<sup>117</sup> A believer should know that his or her supplication will be accepted when he or she makes an effort for Allah. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) states, *"Whoever wishes his prayers to be accepted, his worries and grief to be removed, should lend a hand to those in need."*<sup>118</sup> The invocation is conducive for the human being in finding their true value in the presence of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. This point is emphasized in a verse as follows: *"Say: My Lord would not care for you were it not for your prayer..."*<sup>119</sup> Allah commands the believers to pray and worship, *"And your Lord says: Call upon Me, I will answer you. Surely those who are too proud for My service shall soon enter hell disgraced."*<sup>120</sup> It is the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to say invocations after performing the ritual prayers and during various situations and circumstances. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, *"Whoever performs an obligatory prayer with submission, one of his invocations after this prayer will be accepted."*<sup>121</sup> It is Sunnah to raise one's hands, praise Allah, send blessings upon the Prophet and then supplicate and ask God for whatever he or she wishes. It is important to note that if one simply wants to supplicate to Allah outside of the ritual prayer, then ablution is not required.

116. According to Hanafi school of Law, it is silent.

117. Q. 2: 186.

118. Sahih Muslim, Musaqaat, 32; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, v. III, 32.

119. Q. 25: 77.

120. Q. 40: 60.

121. Sahih al-Bukhari, Jihad, 180; Muslim, Iman, 39.

## The Best Cleanser of Our Body and Soul: ABLUTION (WUDU')

A Muslim pay attention to his personal care very much. He performs ablution every day by washing his hands, face, feet; and washes whole body a few times a week and never smells sweat.

Now it is time for us to learn how to perform ablution.

### 1. PRAYER ABLUTION

Our Prophet gives us good tidings. “When a Muslim or a believer-washes his face (in course of ablution), every sin he contemplated with his eyes will be washed away from his face along with water, or with the last drop of water; when he washes his hands, every sin they wrought will be effaced from his hands with the water, or with the last drop of water; and when he washes his feet, every sin towards which his feet have walked will be washed away with the water or with the last drop of water with the result that he comes out pure from all sins.” (Muslim, Taharah, 32)

As our material body is cleansed by means of performing ablution, our feelings and intentions, which are our spiritual side, are also purified.

After saying Audhu Basmala when we start performing ablution, we wash our hands up to our wrists three times.

*All praises due to Allah, Who made water clean, and Islam as light.*

1



2



I give water to my mouth with my right hand and rinse my mouth three times.

3



I draw water into my nose by my right hand and cleanse it by my left hand three times.

4



I wash my entire face three times.

5



I wash my right arm up to my elbow (including my elbow) three times.

6



I wash my left arm up to my elbow (including my elbow) three times.

7



I wipe my entire head with both of my hands.

I wash my hands and wipe the inner side of my ears with my little finger, and behind my ears with my thumb.

8



9



I wash my right foot up to my ankle (including my ankle) three times with my left hand.

I wash my left foot up to my ankle (including my ankle) three times with my left hand.

We wash all our all limbs by rubbing them well without giving a break in between them.

Ablution is a light, and we shine when we perform ablution. The more we perform ablution, the brighter we become. Our skin becomes beautiful and our eyes start to spread energy of happiness.

## 2. MAJOR ABLUTION (GHUSL)

There is also Major Ablution the we perform in addition to our daily minor ab-lution. With major ablution, our body is cleaned and it smells nicely. Our protecting shield becomes shiny.

### Here is How to Perform Major Ablution (Ghusl)

- Firstly, we wash our hands up to our wrists three times. Because we know that it is a sunnah of our Prophet.

- Then, we clean the impurities from our body, if there is any.

- Later on, we express our intention thinking that “I have indented to perform the obligation of ghusl” or “to remove the big spiritual impurity.”

- Then, we wash our private parts.

- Then, we draw water to our mouth and then to our nostrils and cleanse them.

- Then, we wash our entire face once.

- Then, we wash our hair. We make water reach to the roots of our hair with the help our hands and wash our hair completely by pouring water over our head three times.

- We wash our neck and then wash our shoulders down to our elbows.

- Then, we pour water to the right side of our body down to our heels, and wash the right side of our body by rubbing it with our hands, and then do the same thing to the left side of our body.

- Then, we wash our body completely by rubbing without leaving any dry place. We should be very careful not to forget especially some parts of our body such as belly button, inner parts of our ears, ear hole, the roots of our hair and the roots of our beard.

- We wash between the fingers, and finally we wash our feet well and leave the bath.





### 3. DRY ABLUTION (TAYAMMUM)

Sometimes there are times of drought in our lands. We may not be able to find water for days or sometimes we may not be able to find water when we are in long journeys. When we do not have water, are we going to stay in a spiritually impure state? Of course not. Soil is a clean material. If we perform dry ablution (tayammum) when there is no water, we will be purified from material and spiritual impurities and will be clean. So, are you ready to perform dry ablution (Tayammum)?

- We recite Basmala (in the name of Allah) when we start performing dry ablution (tayammum) and then express our intention.

- We uncover our arms well, and take off our ring, watch, bracelet etc. or we move them while performing dry ablution.

- We keep our fingers separate from each other and we rub our palms on clean soil.

- We rub our entire face starting from up to down with our palms once.

- Then, we rub our palms on the soil again.

- We rub upper part of our right arm with our left arm up to the elbows (including elbows). Then we rub the inner part of our arm starting from the elbow down to our wrist. After that, we move the inner side of our thumb on the outer side of our right thumb.

- After that, first we rub the upper part of our left arm up to the elbow (including elbow) with our right hand, and then rub inside of our arm down to our wrist.

- Then, we rub right palm on our left palm up to our fingers.

- Then we interlock our fingers to each other.

1



2



3










4



## TABLE OF PRAYERS CYCLE BY CYCLE

If you follow this table carefully, you can perform your ritual prayers in a correct way. Don't forget, each prayer cleans you, prevents you from doing mistakes and bad things.

	1st Cycle	2nd Cycle	3rd Cycle	4th Cycle
Performing a two-Cycle Prayer	<p>We express our intention to pray. Then we say "<i>Allahu Akbar</i>"</p>  <p>We recite <i>al-Fatiha</i> and then some more verses from the Qur'an.</p> <p>Then we bow down and say "<i>Subhana rabbiyal azim</i>" as many times as we want.</p> <p>Then we rise back and say "<i>Sami 'Allahu liman hamidah</i>" "<i>Allahumma Rabbana laka'l-hamd</i>"</p> <p>We then prostrate and recite "<i>Rabbi zalamtu nafi wa amiltu su'an faghfir li</i>" and then we rise back from prostration and sit for a while and again prostrate and say "<i>Subhana rabbiy al a'ala</i>" as many times as we want.</p>	<p>We recite <i>al-Fatiha</i> and then some more verses from the Qur'an.</p> <p>Then we bow down and say "<i>Subhana rabbiyal azim</i>" as many times as we want.</p> <p>Then we rise and say "<i>Sami 'Allahu liman hamidah</i>" "<i>Allahumma Rabbana laka'l-hamd</i>"</p>  <p>We then prostrate and recite "<i>Rabbi zalamtu nafi wa amiltu su'an faghfir li</i>" and then we rise back from prostration and sit for a while and again prostrate and say "<i>Subhana rabbiy al a'ala</i>" as many times as we want.</p> <p>We then sit down and recite the supplications of <i>Tahiyat</i>, <i>Salli and Barik and Rabbana atina</i>.</p> <p>And finally, we turn our face to right and say "<i>As salamu alaikum wa rahmatullah</i>" and then to left and say the same statement.</p>		
Performing a three-Cycle prayer	<p>Perform like the first cycle of 'a two-cycle Prayer'</p> 	<p>Perform like the second cycle of 'a two-cycle Prayer.'</p> <p>Recite only the supplication of <i>Tahiyat</i> when you sit but do not turn your face to right or left in the end. Remember, there is one more cycle we need to perform!</p> 	<p><i>al-Fatiha</i> is recited.</p> <p>We bow down and recite "<i>Subhana rabbiya al-azim</i>" as many times as we want. Then we rise and say "<i>Allahumma Rabbana wa lakal hamd</i>"</p> <p>We then prostrate and recite "<i>Rabbi zalamtu nafi wa amiltu su'an faghfir li</i>" and then we rise back from prostration and sit for a while and again prostrate and say the same supplication</p> <p>We then sit down and recite the supplications of <i>Tahiyat</i>, <i>Salli and Barik and Rabbana atina</i>.</p> <p>And finally, we turn our face to right and say "<i>As salamu alaikum wa rahmatullah</i>" and then to left and say the same statement.</p>	

	1st Cycle	2nd Cycle	3rd Cycle	4th Cycle
Performing a four-cycle Obligatory Prayer	<p>Perform the first cycle like the first cycle of 'a three-cycle prayer'.</p>	<p>Perform the second cycle like the second cycle of 'a three cycle prayer'.</p> 	<p>Perform the third cycle like the third cycle of 'a third-cycle prayer.' Do not read any other verses from the Qur'an after <i>Al-Fatiha</i>.</p>	<p>O my friend! Continue performing it like the previous cycle. After prostrations, you can sit down and finish your prayer. Recite the supplications of <i>Tahiyat, Salli and Barik and Rabbana atina</i>. Then we end prayer by turning our head to right and then to left while saying "<i>As salamu alaikum wa rahmatullah</i>". May Allah accept your prayers.</p>
Performing a four-cycle of a Sunnah Muakkada prayer	<p>Perform the first cycle like the first cycle of 'a three-cycle prayer'.</p>	<p>Perform the second cycle like the second cycle of 'a three cycle prayer'.</p>	<p>Perform it like the first cycle. Recite <i>Al-Fatiha</i> and any other <i>Surah</i>; bow down and then prostrate. And this cycle is completed as well.</p> 	<p>Perform it like the second cycle of 'a two-cycle Prayer' and complete your prayer. May Allah accept your prayer.</p> 

## ZAKAH

*Zakah* is an Arabic term with the root meaning, ‘to purify’. *Zakah* is a form of alms obligatory on both males and females, in order for them to purify their wealth by giving to those who are less fortunate. Allah, the Almighty has ordered the payment of zakat in many verses of the Qur’an, such as, “*And keep up prayer and pay the poor rate...*”<sup>122</sup> and “*... And We revealed to them the doing of good deeds, the establishment of prayer, and the giving of zakah*”<sup>123</sup> The obligatory alms is due on the wealth which has been saved during the time period of one year; in other words, it is due on money that has not been spent towards meeting one’s needs. It is important to note that *zakah* is obligatory upon different forms of wealth, such as, money, crops, fruits, livestock and treasures found in the earth. In today’s world, the most common form of wealth is that of money. *Zakah* has to be paid on one’s money if that amount of money reaches the minimum required for *zakah* and if it has been in the person’s possession for the time of a year.

According to Islam, Muslims believe that Allah is the One who creates the wealth and fortune that people earn through working; He is also the One who bestows the wealth on His human beings for the service of humanity. Therefore, there is a responsibility on the people to spend a certain amount of their wealth that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has bestowed upon them for His sake. Moreover, since it is Allah the Almighty Who has ordered the payment of *zakah*, it becomes a responsibility on the believers to carry out this command of their Creator. Islam also recognizes that *zakah* is a tool that brings blessings for the wealth and goods of people; it allows their wealth to increase and grow. Allah says in the Qur’an, “*If you are grateful, I will surely increase you in favor*”<sup>124</sup> and “*And whatsoever you spend of anything (in Allah’s Cause), He will replace it (with something better).*”<sup>125</sup> In some ways, *zakah* pushes Muslims to utilize their money and turn it into an investment, because those who cannot utilize their wealth, are obliged to pay more *zakah* every year. In this manner, the obligatory alms aid in keeping the economy alive, by preventing people from hoarding their money; furthermore, it ensures the flow of capital and removes the extreme imbalances that can result due to the difference of wealth between the rich and the poor. In other words *zakah* allows for the establishment of peace

122. Q.2:43; 4:77; 14:65

123. Q. 21:73

124. Q. 14:7

125. Q. 34:39



in the community. At the same time, spiritually, *zakah* purifies the wealth and protects the individual from morally questionable traits, such as, stinginess and greed; instead it encourages the Muslim to be a giving and generous person. Allah the Almighty states in the Qur'an, "*Take, from their wealth a charity (zakah) by which you purify them and cause them increase.*"<sup>126</sup>

There are certain conditions that need to be met in order for *zakah* to be obligatory upon someone. Some of these conditions are related to the person who is going to pay *zakah*, others are related to the goods out of which the zakat is going to be paid. The person who will give the *zakah* must be a Muslim and he/she must be free. For those who have not reached puberty or who are not sane, it is obligatory upon their guardians to pay *zakah* on their behalf out of their wealth. For *zakah* to be obligatory, it is mandatory that the person is free of debt. The minimum required holding of wealth before one is obligated to pay *zakah* is known as the *nisab*. The wealth that is payable as *zakah*, must reach the amount of *nisab* or must be equal to, or more than the value of *nisab*. If a person's wealth is below the value of *nisab*, they are not obligated to pay *zakah*. In fact there is a distinct *nisab* for gold and for silver. In the case of gold, silver or currency (including bank savings), the *nisab* should have been in the person's possession for a period of one year. In present day, most people hold currency rather than gold or silver as savings, therefore, the specific *nisab* is commonly based upon the currency's purchasing power, which is actually backed by gold and silver. Information regarding the specific amount for *nisab* is usually available through the internet. There is no *zakah* on precious stones that are not gold or silver. Moreover, personal possessions, such as, furniture, horses, cars, honey, milk etc. is not subject to the payment of *zakah*, provided that such possessions are not kept for the purpose of trade.

The *nisab* for the wealth and savings of an individual is calculated as two and a half percent of the total cash value of such items. Furthermore, *zakah* must be paid once a year on livestock; such as cows, camels, sheep and goats; when their number has reached the level of the *nisab*. There is no zakat on donkeys and mules. For example, if one owns 30 to 39 cows, then the *zakah* to be given is 1 two-year-old cow, and, if 40 to 59 cows are owned, then 1 three-year-old cow is to be paid as *zakah*. Similarly, if the number of sheep or goats owned are 40 to 120, then the *zakah* to be given is 1 one-year-old sheep or goat, if 101 to 200 sheep are owned, then 2 sheep or goats are to be given as *zakah*, if 201 to 399 sheep are owned, then 3 sheep or goats are to be paid as *zakah* and if 400 and above sheep or goats are owned, then 1 sheep or goat for each hundred owned is to be paid as *zakah*. *Zakah* is also to be paid on crops whenever a crop is harvested. It is to be paid on wheat, rice and other

126. Q. 9:103



grains, all kinds of beans and peas, groundnut, dates, olives, and their equivalents in various parts of the world. As recommended by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) the *nisab* for farm produce if the land is irrigated naturally (by a spring, rainfall, or a river) is one-tenth, and if it is irrigated by drawing water from a well or dam, the *nisab* is one half of one-tenth. *Zakah* is not required on fruits and vegetables that perish quickly when picked, such as, oranges, bananas, pineapples, mangoes, guavas, lettuce spinach, tomatoes, peppers, etc.

The manner in which to pay *zakah* is to make an intention at the time of giving it but there is no need to express verbally to those who receive it, that it is *zakah*.<sup>127</sup> In Islam *zakah* has to be distributed to specific categories of people. Allah has mentioned those categories in the following verse: *“The alms are only for the poor, the needy, those employed to collect (the funds), and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam); and to free the captives; and for those in debt; and for Allah’s Cause, and for the wayfarer (a traveler who is cut off from everything); a duty imposed by Allah. And Allah is the All-Knower, the All-Wise.”*<sup>128</sup> In this verse, the poor mean, the people who do not have enough food to eat for a year. The needy, cover the people who do not own anything at all. The latter people are in more need than the poor. Those employed to collect the *zakah* i.e. the collectors that participate in every job concerning the collection and the distribution of the *zakah*, receive a specified portion of the collected *zakah* as salary in exchange for the service they carry out; they are paid a specified portion of the *zakah* even if they may be wealthy and well off financially. *Zakah* is also distributable to people whose hearts have been inclined towards Islam i.e. the non-believers, in the hope that they will become Muslim by seeing the good of the Muslim society; *zakah* can also be paid to Muslims who are new to Islam, in the hope that their choice will be strengthened, or, in the case that these new Muslims may have suffered financial or other loss due to the rejection and persecution by their people. In the past when the taking of war prisoners and slavery was wide spread, *zakah* was distributed to such Muslims who had been taken as slaves or prisoners of war, with the purpose of empowering them to buy their own freedom. The sixth category of people to receive the *zakah*, are those who are weighed down with debts but they lack the means to pay off these debts. The seventh category is specified for those who are on the Path of Allah; this covers all the uses of money for the defense and propagation of Islam. In relation to this it can be stated that the Islamic organizations of present day, dedicated to spreading the message of Islam, are eligible to receive *zakah*. Fi-

127. According to Hanafis and Malikis, it is better if *zakah* is given secretly so that the receiver is not humiliated since it may hurt their feelings and also so that this act of generosity is not openly shown to everyone. However, according to the Shafi’i and Hanbali madhhabs, it is more appropriate for the *zakah* to be given openly in order to encourage people to implement this ‘*ibādah*’.

128. Q. 9:60

nally, the wayfarers, refers to the people who are left stranded during their journey because their money has run out and they are unable to reach their homeland. In the categories mentioned above, with the exception of those whose hearts will be attracted to Islam-, it is required for these people to be free, Muslim and not to be of the Hashemite lineage. It is not obligatory for the *zakah* to be distributed equally amongst these eight groups of people; it is possible for the *zakah* to be given to only one person or to one category. In addition, it is possible to use the *zakah* to assist a destitute person who has trouble meeting their needs of paying their rent, by making them a homeowner.

Normal charity which is called, '*sadaqa*' in Islam, is also strongly recommended to Muslims; *sadaqa* can be given anywhere and at any time. *Sadaqa* may be in the form of money, food, clothing or even a deed. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) mentioned that an act of kindness can also be considered *sadaqa* (charity). In other words, removing harmful objects from the road, helping someone to load his vehicle or even smiling at someone is a form of *sadaqa*. Therefore, every person, whether rich or poor, has the means to give *sadaqa*, i.e. to help his or her relatives, neighbors and other people, in order to gain Allah's pleasure.

## SIYAM

The lexical meaning of the word, '*sawm*' (fasting), is to keep oneself away from an action. In legal terminology, it means, for people who are legally responsible, to carry out this act of worship, by staying away from eating, drinking and engaging in sexual relations from the time of the dawn until the setting of the sun, with the intention of performing an act of worship. Fasting is a source of self-restraint, piety and achieving God consciousness. The purpose of *sawm* is to seek *taqwa* (heightened spiritual awareness of Allah). Fasting was even prescribed by Allah for the people before the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), "*O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may attain taqwa [self-restraint, piety and God-consciousness]*"<sup>129</sup> There are countless spiritual and moral benefits to fasting. *Sawm* is an act of obedience to Allah. A fasting person is willing to sacrifice his basic humanly needs in submission to Allah's Will and to seek His pleasure and blessings. In their hunger and thirst, the humans can feel the essence of Allah's immense power. *Sawm* teaches good behavior and discipline; it does not require abstinence from eating and drinking only, but rather, a fasting individual must also try to keep in check,

129. Q. 2:183

all their improper behavior. The Prophet is reported to have said, *“If one does not abandon falsehood in words and deeds, Allah has no need of his abandoning his food and drink”*.<sup>130</sup>

Therefore, fasting strengthens people’s will-power and helps them to control the wants and desires of their inner self (*nafs*). By exercising patience while being hungry, human beings learn to apply self-control in all difficult circumstances; they learn to become masters of their desires rather than slaves to their longings. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) expressed this truth by stating, *“Fasting constitutes half the patience.”*<sup>131</sup> Another hadith expressing the importance of fasting is as follows; A man came to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) and said, “Order me to do something from which Allah will make me benefit from.” The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) stated, *“I recommend fasting to you, continue with that because that is an act of worship with no equal.”*<sup>132</sup> Fasting vitalizes the feelings of compassion, love and mercy in people; it enables these peaceful feelings to replace resentments and disappointments. Moreover, fasting can help people’s physical health by removing harmful substances from the body which have accumulated over time; the Prophet stated, *“Fast and you will gain health.”*<sup>133</sup> In the following Hadith, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), further expressed that fasting is also a means by which sins are forgiven; *“Whosoever fasts in the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from Allah then all his previous sins will be forgiven.”*<sup>134</sup> *Sawm* unites Muslims all over the world, it brings together the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the men and the women; whatever their status, they share the same experience of sacrificing their needs to please Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. *Sawm* may also help the wealthier Muslims to empathize with those Muslims and non-Muslims who suffer poverty and hardship; by experiencing the effects of hunger and thirst, any Muslim can better understand the suffering of another.



Fasting in the month of Ramadan is one of the five basic principles of Islam. It was made obligatory upon believers in the second year of the Hijrah. The obligation of fasting is stated in the following verses of the Qur’an, *“O you who believe*

130. Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 30, Hadith 1

131. Sunan Ibn Majah, Kitab as-siyam. 44.

132. Sunan an-Nasai, Kitab as-siyam, 165.

133. Sunan at-Tabarani, Bab as-sawm, 5.

134. Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 32, Hadith 1

*decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous.*” and, “*So whoever sights [the new moon of] the month, let him fast.*”<sup>135</sup> In order for the Ramadan fasting to be considered obligatory, it must be undertaken during the month of Ramadan. Allah’s Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) stated, “*Start fasting when you see the crescent of the month of Ramadan.*”<sup>136</sup> As it is understood from the verses of the Qur’an and the above Hadith of the Prophet, it is obligatory upon every Muslim, who is *mukallaf* (legally responsible), to fast in the month of Ramadan every year. Taking the obligation of fasting lightly or denying that it is an obligatory act of worship is unacceptable in Islam. As for the person who believes that fasting is obligatory, but still does not fast without having a valid excuse, he/she is seen as committing a sin.

Fasting is classified into different categories according to certain rulings; namely, obligatory (*fard*), recommended (*mandub*), disliked (*makruh*) and forbidden (*haram*). There are two types of fasts that are *fard*; firstly, fasting in the month of Ramadan, which is obligatory upon all Muslims who carry the conditions of being a *mukallaf*. In other words, Muslims who are able-minded, have reached puberty and have no valid excuses that prevent them from fasting, are required to fast in the month of Ramadan. Muslims are obligated to make up any Ramadan fast (*qada* and *kafara*) that could not be performed, or, that was broken due to a valid excuse or without an excuse. According to most Muslim jurists, the making up and the expiation of these fasts needs to be fulfilled in the same year they were not performed. Those who did not fast in the month of Ramadan must make up for these days in the days other than the month of Ramadan, except the days when fasting is not allowed. Secondly, if someone vows to fast, the fast becomes obligatory for them (*nadhr*). The recommended fasts according to the Sunnah are,

such as, fasting on the day of Arafa for the person who is not performing the major pilgrimage (*Hajj*), fasting on the eight days before the day of Arafa, fasting on the day of *ashura* (that is the tenth day of the month of Muharram), fasting on a day before or after *ashura*, fasting in the months of Rajab and Shaban, fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, fasting on the fifteenth day of the month of Shaban, and fasting three days in every lunar month. Disliked or *makruh* fasting according to Islam is as follows; it is considered repre-



135. Q. 2: 183

136. Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 30, Hadith 10.



hensible to fast three days consecutively on the thirteenth, the fourteenth and the fifteenth days of a lunar month. Even though fasting in the month of Shawwal is *Sunnah*, it is reprehensible to fast six days consecutively without taking a break after the feast of Ramadan.<sup>137</sup> Finally, the forbidden category of fasting includes; not fasting on the day of the Ramadan festival (*Eid al-Fitr*, the day of the sacrificial holiday (*Eid al-Adha*), the days of *tashriq* (total four days). It is also forbidden for women who are menstruating to fast until their menstruation ceases and for women who are experiencing post natal bleeding following child birth. Furthermore, it is forbidden to fast for any person who is suffering from a terminal illness or a condition whereby fasting may lead to the further deterioration of their health or even result in their death.

There are two essential principles of fasting, which are, to make an intention and to stay away from things that break the fast. In order for the intention to be considered valid, it should be made at night or just before the time of dawn. The intention can be made for the whole month of Ramadan, or it can be made for one day at a time. Concerning the former method, one intention is sufficient for all the fasts that are going to be performed consecutively, however, it is important to note that the fasts should not be interrupted due to making a journey, becoming ill or menstruation etcetera. Concerning the latter method of making an intention, the intention needs to be renewed every night for the next day's fast. It is considered *mandūb* to make a separate intention for every day. It is perfectly satisfactory to make this intention in any language, in the mind or out aloud.<sup>138</sup>

It is recommended for a Muslim to partake in the '*suhur*', a pre-dawn meal. It is the *Sunnah* of the Prophet to eat a pre-dawn meal; *suhur* is intended to reduce the hardship of *sawm* during the day. However, if due to over-sleeping or any other cause, upon waking a person finds that it is already dawn, or if they are not certain whether dawn has broken, they should refrain from eating or drinking. It is safest to awake early enough to eat and finish the meal about 20 minutes before dawn, since eating after dawn would nullify the day's fast. As soon as the sun has set, the Muslim should break his fast with *iftar* (breakfast). It is suggested that if the *iftar* is light, for example, a few dates or other fruit and water; one may have it before offering the Sunset prayer. However, if one is having a heavy *iftar*, perhaps it is better to offer the prayer first to avoid missing its proper time. It is *Sunnah* to break the fast with dates, water or something sweet, to say an invocation at the time of

137. In both of the above mentioned cases the reasons that cause reprehensibility of fasting is the worry about leading people to think such consecutive fasting is obligatory in Islam.

138. *I intend to fast in the month of Ramadan, as a Fard act of worship to You. I pray to You to accept the fast from me.*



*iftar* and to invite a fasting Muslim to *iftar*. Ramadan is also seen as the best time to help relatives and give charity to the poor.

It is important to note that if necessary, the following types of people are allowed to defer their fasting: (a) *The ill*: if the *sawm* is likely to make the illness worse. (b) *The mentally ill*: for as long as the mental illness lasts. (c) *The traveler*: when the journey is made to such a distance that it is possible to shorten the *salah*, (d) *The pregnant woman*: if the *sawm* is likely to harm the health of the mother or her unborn child and (e) *The nursing mother*: if the *sawm* is likely to harm the health of the mother and/or prevent her from having enough milk for her baby. This is because Allah, Almighty does not burden his servants with responsibilities they are not able to carry out. Allah states in the Qur'an, "*O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard (against evil). For a certain number of days; but whoever among you is sick or on a journey, then (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days; and those who are not able to do it may effect a redemption by feeding a poor man; so whoever does good spontaneously it is better for him; and that you fast is better for you if you knew.*"<sup>139</sup>

It is also important to note that if the fasting is missed without a valid excuse and the missed fast(s) cannot be made up, then the *fidya* is paid. This is the financial compensation paid for every obligatory fast that has not been carried out, "...and upon those who are able [to fast, out during Ramadan and could not be made up but with hardship] -they must give a ransom [as before the following year's Ramadan by those who are unable to fast payment of *fidya* as a compensation substitute] of feeding a poor person [each day]." *Fidya* is normally given as currency, the monetary value of the weight of one *mud*<sup>140</sup>, approximately 687 grams, to a charity organization that provides food items,<sup>141</sup> or to the poor as compensation for each day that a person was not able to fast in the month of Ramadan. The new Muslim can visit their local Muslim charity to find out the current rate of *fidya* or give food items locally. It is important to note that those who are unable to fast because of their old age or chronic illness, they are not obliged to pay the *fidya*, but it is *mustahab* (recommended) if they do so.

For the new Muslim it is imperative that they clearly understand the things and the situations that break the fast and require both making it up (*Qada*) and expiation (*Kafara*). For example, engaging in sexual relations while fasting, intentionally emitting semen while fasting, revoking the intention of fasting during the day or night, intentionally taking something solid or liquid through the mouth

139. Q. 2:183-184

140. Q. 2: 184.

141. A measurement used in the time of the Prophet (peace be up on him)

that will break the fast, intentionally vomiting and intentionally eating or drinking something that is edible during the daytime in the month of Ramadan breaks the fast, and, requires both *qada* and *kafara*. Depending on the person's choice, the *kafara* for such broken fasts can be one of the following three things: 1. Feeding sixty poor people; for each poor person a mud amount of food is given. 2. Fasting for two months consecutively in accordance with the lunar calendar. 3. The freeing of a slave (this was carried out in the past when slavery was widespread; it is difficult to undertake in the present day and age). Other situations require only *qada*, for instance, when the fasting is broken due to: a. illness, however, when a person has recovered, after Ramadan, he or she should fast the number of days equal to the number missed during Ramadan; b. if a person is travelling then after Ramadan that person should fast a number of days equal to the number of days missed during travel in the month of Ramadan; c. if a person has to be intravenously fed or have injections for nutritional purposes<sup>142</sup> then the person has to make up their missed fast(s). However, a person does not have to do the *qada* if he or she eats, drinks, smokes, or engages in sexual activity while in a state of forgetfulness during the state of fasting. In this case, he or she should stop eating, drinking etcetera the moment they remember and continue to fulfill the fast of that day. This brings us to the situations and incidents that do not break the fast, for example; involuntarily vomiting, a fly or any insect entering one's mouth, dust from the road entering one's throat, flour entering the throat of the miller, baker etcetera, liquid medicine applied to a wound around the stomach or chest area, cleaning one's teeth, a thirsty person rinsing his/her mouth with water, and being in the state of *janāba*. All of these do not break the fast.

As a new Muslim if you are partaking in the fasting of the month of Ramadan for the first time, you may come across the act of, '*itikaf*', which lexically means, 'to stay somewhere, to wait, to be patient and not to leave a certain location'. In Islamic legal terminology it means that a Muslim who has reached the age of discernment, retires inside a *masjid* while fasting and distances himself from sexual desires and everything related to it. *Itikaf* is one of the *nafla* (extra) acts of worship. The minimum amount of time for *itikaf* is one day and one night. The most virtuous *itikaf* is the one that is carried out in the last ten days of Ramadan because *Laylat al-Qadr* (The night of Power)<sup>143</sup> is amongst these days. During the *itikaf* the Muslim spends his or her<sup>144</sup> time in *salah*, asking Allah's forgiveness, remembering

142. Other medical injections, such as vaccinations, do not nullify the fast

143. This night is considered the holiest night of the year, and is traditionally celebrated on the 27<sup>th</sup> night of Ramadan but it is possible for it to be during any night of the last ten days of Ramadan. It is known as the "Night of Power," and commemorates the night that the Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Prayers are answered and blessings are abundant.

144. Females normally do this act of worship at home.

Allah (*dhikr*), reciting the Qur'an and invoking Allah's blessings on the Prophet. In many Muslim cultures today, this is considered a very virtuous and popular act of worship, and, most mosques are filled up with Muslims carrying out *itikaf* during the last ten days of Ramadan.

## HAJJ

*Hajj* is an Arabic word, which translates as pilgrimage. The fifth pillar of Islam is the pilgrimage to the Kaba in Mecca on specific dates during the month of *Dhu al-Hijjah*<sup>145</sup>. Hajj was made *fard* in the ninth year of *Hijrah*. The obligation of hajj is established by the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet and *ijma* (the consensus of the Muslim scholars). Allah says in the Qur'an, "*Pilgrimage to the Sacred House is a duty to Allah for humankind, for him who is able to make the journey.*"<sup>146</sup> Every Muslim (male and female) is required to make the pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime. A person who is unable to do so due to illness, safety, ability or lack of finances, is excused. A person who has debts is not permitted to make pilgrimage until he or she has settled all debts.<sup>147</sup> There is no harm in children accompanying their parents for *Hajj*. However, it does not exempt them from having to complete *Hajj* when they become mature adults. It is not permissible for the believers to send someone to perform the hajj on behalf of them if they do not have a valid excuse. However, if they are not in a state to go to hajj, then they may send someone else as their representative. Normally a woman should be accompanied by a *mahram* (her husband or a close male relative), but according to the Shafi'i school of law, a woman who is not accompanied by her husband or a close male relative may set out on the journey of pilgrimage with a trustworthy group of women in order to perform the hajj that is obligatory upon her.

The pilgrimage season starts during the month of *Shawwal*, whereas, the actual pilgrimage is performed from the 8th to the 13th of *Dhu al-Hijjah*. If a pilgrim visits the Kaba at any other time of the year, they cannot perform *hajj*, but they can perform *umrah* (the Lesser Pilgrimage). The new Muslim should be aware that an *umrah* performed during the season of *hajj* is in fact, a part of the *hajj*. There are three methods of performing the pilgrimage and all require the completion of certain procedures, which, are known as the rites of *hajj*. The pilgrim should make his or her intention according to the pilgrimage he or she chooses to perform. The different types of pilgrimage are: 1. *Ifrad* (*hajj* only); the pilgrim performs only the *hajj*. 2. *Qiran* (combined *hajj*); the pilgrim performs the *hajj* and the *umrah* together, in one *ihram* and without changing their *ihram*. 3. *Tamattu* (*hajj* with ease); this

145. The 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month of the Muslim calendar.

146. Q. 3:97

147. Q. 3: 97

is performed as follows, during the season of *hajj*, the pilgrim first wears the *ihram*<sup>148</sup> for *umrah* and after it is completed, during the same season-before returning home- he/she wears the *ihram* once again and performs the obligatory *hajj*.



On their way to Mecca, when the pilgrims are arriving from various directions, they enter the state of *ihram* at a number of certain assembly points called *miqāt* in Arabic. The state of *ihram* means to cleanse the whole body; for the men it means to put on two pieces of unsewn white cloth, leaving the head bare and to wear footwear that does not cover the heels and for women it means to cover everything but the face, feet and hands. The new Muslim should be aware that there are a number of acts that must be avoided once the state of *ihram* is entered into such as: a. hunting or killing a living thing; b. sexual pleasure of any kind; c. shaving or cutting the hair; d. trimming the nails; and e. wearing perfume, cologne, or cosmetics. All the acts and prohibitions of the state of *ihram* are there to help the pilgrim attain a higher state of mind. First, the pilgrim circumambulates the Kaba seven times. This is known as *tawaff*. This is followed by supplication and drinking from the water of *Zamzam*. The next ritual of *Hajj* is the *sa'y*, which is the walk between the hills of Safa and Marwa.<sup>149</sup> Pilgrims may first perform the *tawaff* and the *sa'y* immediately as they arrive or just before the eighth of *Dhu al-Hijjah*. On the day of the eighth of *Dhu al-Hijjah*, all pilgrims leave Mecca to spend the night at Mina, continuing their *talbiyah* (glorification of Allah) and quiet meditation. On the morning of the ninth of *Dhu al-Hijjah*, the pilgrims move from Mina to the plain of Arafat. Spending the day at Arafat is the most important rite of *hajj*. It is said that there is no *hajj* without the standing at Arafat. According to the Maliki school of law, the *Zuhr* and the *Asr* prayers are combined and shortened to two cycles each. The pilgrims remain standing until sunset, glorifying Allah, praying for the Prophet, for themselves, relatives, friends and other Muslims. If tired, they may sit down to rest occasionally. Females are allowed to remain seated during the entire stay at Arafat, if they wish. The pilgrims must leave Arafat soon after sunset without performing the Maghrib prayer.

148. It refers to the acceptance of the person, who intends to perform *hajj* and *umrah*, certain actions and behavior as prohibited to himself/herself which are permissible at other times for a certain period of time, in other words until the requirements of *hajj* and *umrah* are completed. It also includes the two pieces of cloth men wear at this point.

149. To walk from Safa to Marwa four times, and to come back from Marwa to Safa three times between the hills of Safa and Marwa, this makes up seven *shawts* (circuits). This is one of the obligatory tasks of *hajj* and *umrah*.



Instead, the *salah* of Maghrib is combined with the *Isha* prayer at Muzdalifah.<sup>150</sup> The pilgrims spend the night in this open field in prayer, rest and collecting pebbles to stone the *Jamarāt*, the three symbolic Shaitans, in Mina. After the *Fajr* prayer, which the pilgrims perform in congregation, they perform *wuquf* (Praying in the standing position) until daybreak. Then, they return to Mina, where they throw seven small stones at the largest of the *Jamarāt*. This is symbolic for the pilgrims to show that they resolve never to follow the path of evil and wrongdoing. After throwing the stones, the pilgrims offer a sacrifice of a sheep, goat, cow, or a camel at Mina. Since the day of the tenth of *Dhu al-Hijjah* is the day of *Eid al-‘Adha*, the Muslims all over the world also offer animal sacrifice. Following the sacrifice, pilgrims shave their heads or have a haircut. Their *ihram* is ended by the pilgrims changing into regular clothes. This is followed by the pilgrims leaving for Mecca to perform the obligatory *tawaff*, which is best performed on the day of sacrifice, but may be completed later on, if necessary. It is obligatory to pass the nights of the tenth and the eleventh of *Dhu al-Hijjah* at Mina. Every pilgrim is required to stone each of the three *Jamarāt* seven times. It is also *Sunnah* to pay a last visit to the Kaba for a farewell *tawaff* just before the departing from Mecca.

The new Muslim should know that the spiritual atmosphere during *haji* is unlike any other a Muslim may experience. First of all, the pilgrim finally has the opportunity to see the birthplace of Islam and our beloved Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Being in the presence of the Kaba gives the feeling of being very close to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, and sharing this experience with millions of other Muslims gives an overwhelming sense of the universal strength of Islam. The pilgrim must remember to maintain good behavior and relations with other pilgrims. In the Qur’an it says, “*And whoever undertakes the pilgrimage in those (months,) shall on pilgrimage, abstain from lewd speech, from all wicked conduct, and from quarreling; and whatever good you do, Allah*

*is aware of it.*”<sup>151</sup> Therefore, for a successful *haji*, a pilgrim must have piety, self-control and set a high standard of behavior for themselves. Moreover, upon returning from *haji*, he or she should also strive to maintain this elevated code of behavior throughout their daily life.

Many Muslims desire to visit Medina, pray at the *Masjid al-Nabi*, offer greetings to the Prophet, which means to stand and greet him at his grave, and visit the many blessed



150. Muzdalifah is located halfway between Arafat and Mina.

151. Q. 2: 197

places that relate to the life of the Prophet and his companions. It is true that the visit to Medina is not a part of the *hajj* rites, yet most pilgrims seem to feel that their mission is incomplete without a visit to Medina. Like Mecca, Medina is also considered *haram* (sacred), as it is the second holiest city of Islam. For the pilgrims the journey from Mecca to Medina is filled with emotions, as the *hujjaj* (pilgrims) make their way to Medina saying their greetings of *salam* and uttering the praises of the Prophet. It is customary upon arrival at the prophet's mosque, to offer two *cycle* of *Sunnah salah*. Upon seeing the mosque of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and visiting other historical sites in Medina, the pilgrim is reminded of the sacrifices made by the early Muslims; this enhances the experience of the *hajj* and helps to strengthen their faith and conviction.

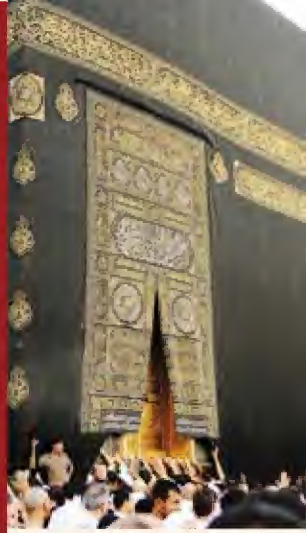


At this juncture, the new Muslim should note that no one is permitted to pray to the Prophet or prostrate to his grave. Occasionally, some people, out of love for the Prophet, unfortunately commit such unacceptable acts, without fully realizing the sinfulness of their actions. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) continuously warned us against all such acts; Muslims have been repeatedly informed that to express true love for the the Prophet, is to follow his *Sunnah*. Once the pilgrim is ready to depart from Mecca and Medina, he or she should commit themselves to follow the teachings of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* for the rest of their life and to the best of their ability, make sure to avoid what is forbidden in Islam.<sup>152</sup>

On that point, let us note that all sincere Muslims ought to do their utmost best to try to follow the teachings of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). For this purpose, new Muslims should acquaint themselves with the Qur'an and learn about the Prophet Muhammad, who is an example for all Muslims. The Qur'anic verses that were revealed at different time and places for various reasons, cultivated the Prophet, as well as, educating the new Muslims in Arabia. For instance, by following the chronological order of the verses that were revealed, it is possible to see how the people around the Prophet were transformed from a *Jahiliyya* society to a new and pure society of Islam. Therefore, let us first briefly revisit the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) in the following chapter, in order to give the reader an overview of his life, and, then go onto having a closer look at the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*.

152. For more information please read, Hasan Serhat Yeter and Soner Duman, *Fiqh 1: According to Maliki School of Law*, İstanbul: Erkam Publication, 2015.





## LIFE OF THE PROPHET

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### BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was born in the city of Mecca, which is located in the western part of the Arabian Peninsula, in the year 570. His father was Abdullah, who was the son of Abdul-Muttalib from the Banu Hashim branch of the Quraysh tribe, and his mother was Amina, the daughter of Wahb ibn Abdumanaf, who was a member of the Banu Zuhra branch of the Quraysh tribe. The Prophet was their only child. Prophet Muhammad's father Abdullah bin Abdul-Muttalib died before the Prophet was born and when Muhammad reached the age of six his mother Amina also died. Muhammad was entrusted to the care of his grandfather Abdul-Muttalib, who was more than eighty years-of-age at the time, Abdul-Muttalib passed away not long after he handed over the custody and protection of his grandson, then eight years-of-age, to the latter's paternal uncle, Abu Talib. Abu Talib was a trader and when the Prophet was nine years of age, he accompanied Abu Talib to Syria. Their caravan stopped in Bosra, located in Syria and, it is transmitted that a monk called Bahira, living in a monastery, invited the caravan to join him for a meal. It was during this event that Bahira told Abu Talib that he recognized Muhammad as the long awaited Prophet foretold in the Bible. He cautioned Abu Talib against some of the dangers that his nephew could face and advised Abu Talib to protect his nephew well. Upon this warning, Abu Talib ended his journey and returned to Mecca. It is also well-known that when the Prophet Muhammad was about ten years old, he worked as a shepherd for a period of time, in order to help his uncle Abu Talib who had a large family.

### MARRIAGE AND HOUSEHOLD

Growing up the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was a noble and highly respected young man. He made his living through trade and continued this trade when his uncle became older. There is consensus amongst the sources that the Prophet Muhammad lived an honest life and stayed away from the wrongdoing prevalent during that Age of Ignorance. At the age of twenty five, due to his decency, bravery, compassion, fairness, and his honesty and reliability in commercial life, he came to be known as, Muhammad al-Amin or Al-Amin (the Trustworthy). Khadija was the daughter of Khuwaylid ibn Asad, a prominent member of the Quraysh. Khadija, who was married twice before marrying the Prophet,



was a noble, beautiful and rich woman. After the death of her second husband, she received several marriage proposals from the leading figures of the tribe of Quraysh; however, she refused them all. Khadija made her living through trade with people whom she considered reliable. Upon advice she had received, Khadija proposed marriage to the Prophet Muhammad and he accepted. It is recorded that the Prophet Muhammad was twenty-five years old and Khadija was forty years old at the time of their marriage. The couple had seven children; Qasim, Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthum, Fatima, Abdullah (Tayyib), and Tahir. Abdullah and Tahir died before the prophethood of Muhammad. Khadija ceaselessly supported the Prophet Muhammad, both materially and spiritually, throughout their twenty-five-year long marriage. As the first person to believe in the Prophet, Khadija remained by his side during the most difficult of times. She was the Prophet's first wife and the mother of all of his children, with the exception of Ibrahim. The Prophet never forgot her goodness and devotion. As is known, the Prophet Muhammad did not marry any other woman while Khadija was alive, and married all his other wives after she passed away.

## REVELATION AND THE MECCAN PERIOD

The Prophet Muhammad was chosen as a Messenger by God when he was forty years of age. It is reported that Muhammad did not agree with his society's beliefs in idols and or their social actions. A few years prior to his Prophethood, in the month of Ramadan, he had begun to retreat to the secluded cave of Mount Hira. Aisha, who most probably heard this from the Prophet, reported the following, "The commencement of the Divine revelation to God's Messenger was in the form of good dreams, which came true like bright daylight, and then the love of seclusion was bestowed upon him. He used to go into seclusion in the cave of Hira where he used to worship (God alone), continuously for many days before his desire to see his family brought him back. He used to take with him prepared food for the journey and for his stay, and then come back to (his wife) Khadija to take his food likewise again, till suddenly the Truth descended upon him while he was in the cave of Hira. The angel came to him and asked him to read. The Prophet replied, *'I do not know how to read.'* The Prophet added, *'The angel caught me (forcefully) and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it any more. He then released*



*me and again asked me to read and I replied, 'I do not know how to read.' Thereupon he caught me again and pressed me a second time till I could not bear it any more. He then released me and again asked me to read but again I replied, 'I do not know how to read (or what shall I read)?' Thereupon he caught me for the third time and pressed me, and then released me and said, 'Read in the name of your Lord, who has created (all that exists), created man from a clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous.'*<sup>153</sup> It was in that cave in 610 CE that Prophet Muhammad received from Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, the first verses of the Qur'an. Then and there, history changed. The main message that Muhammad was to convey to his people was that there was only One God and that Muhammad was the last Prophet of God. The Qur'an continued to be revealed in fragments to the Prophet Muhammad over the following twenty three years. During these twenty three years of the Prophet receiving revelation, the Qur'an was the most important agenda for the Muslims; it was part and parcel of their daily lives. The last words of the Book were revealed to the Prophet shortly before his death in 632 CE.

The Prophet Muhammad was commanded to invite those close to him to the religion of Islam. This invitation continued in secret for approximately three years. The public invitation to Islam started in Mecca after the fourth year of Prophethood. The Prophet began this difficult task by first addressing the tribe of Quraysh. However, very few of the inhabitants of Mecca paid any heed to his words and slowly the leading elite started to persecute anybody who accepted Muhammad's message. The Quraysh began to humiliate and insult Prophet Muhammad due to his criticism of their beliefs and attitudes; they increased in their enmity towards him when they saw that he was gaining support. After a certain time they did not refrain from resorting to violence. The Prophet was subjected to harassment and abuse. However, armed with patience, resilience, determination and the protection of his uncle Abu Talib and the clan of Hashim, the Prophet was able to carry on preaching



the new faith to people. However, the people that accepted Islam, many of whom were slaves and the poor, had to suffer all kinds of persecution, including brutal torture and murder. Finally, in 614 CE, the Prophet instructed a group of Muslims to escape the persecution by going to Abyssinia and seeking the protection of its just Christian king. The Quraysh then sent a delegation to the king, carrying precious gifts, to secure the extradition of the Muslim refugees. However, the king rejected

153. Q. 96:1-5.

the bribe and let the Muslims stay in Abyssinia. One year later, the Quraysh imposed economic and social sanctions on the Prophet, his followers and his clan. As a result, the Muslims began to live in a sanctioned off place near a mountain in Mecca. These sanctions lasted approximately three years before they came to an end. Soon after the decision to cease the sanctions due to support of the Hasimite clan, the Prophet lost his beloved wife Khadija and his uncle. The loss of his uncle's protection resulted in the further persecution of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers at the hands of the disbelievers; their relentless attempts to uproot Islam and destroy its adherents increased tenfold.

From the first years of his Prophethood, the Prophet Muhammad had demonstrated great efforts to convey the message of Islam to those who came to Mecca for pilgrimage, as well as, those who visited the city's fairs for trade. The most fruitful of these contacts were those he made with the people of Yathrib. In 622 CE, during the season of pilgrimage at Mecca, Muhammad met with a number of leaders from the city of Yathrib, where he had previously sent some Muslims to settle. These leaders made a pledge to protect the Prophet against the Quraysh and invited him to live in Yathrib. The Prophet then began to instruct Muslims to immigrate, individually, or in small groups, to Yathrib. The Quraysh tried to prevent Muslims from fleeing Mecca but most Muslims succeeded to migrate, and finally, Muhammad himself decided to immigrate. The various clans of the tribe of Quraysh agreed to act as one and assassinate the Prophet before he left Mecca. The thought behind acting collectively was so that no one party could be blamed for the killing of the Prophet and hence, become embroiled in a war of vengeance with the clan of Hashim. However, the assassination plan was sabotaged by divine intervention. The night the murder was planned to take place, Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, informed His Prophet of the danger and ordered him to secretly leave Mecca and head to the city of Yathrib (which had become known as Medina by then). This famous event, known as the '*Hijrah*' (immigration), had far-reaching consequences with regards to establishing the Muslim community, strengthening the position of Islam and spreading its message. The new Muslim should also be aware of the fact that this event marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar known as the '*Hijri*' calendar.

## THE MEDINAN PERIOD AND THE CONQUEST OF MECCA

In Medina the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), structured a treaty for all the inhabitants to live in peace; it meant equity for all, governed by the Prophet and mutual consultation. However, soon afterwards this new emerging community was faced with external challenges, such as, the Quraysh increasing

their assault by first confiscating the valuables of the Muslims that they had left in Mecca and selling them through caravans heading towards Syria. In relation to these circumstances, the Muslims were given divine allowance to fight against their oppressors and in due time the battles of Badr and Uhud were fought between the two sides. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and the Muslims engaged in these battles with great discipline, by avoiding injury to the innocent and by using only the minimum force required. By the year 627 CE, the Quraysh allied themselves with one of the Jewish tribes of Medina and some of the other Arabian tribes and attacked the city of Medina. During this battle of the Trench, the Muslims lost many men while defending their city and religion. This resulted in many widowed Muslim women and numerous orphaned children. In such challenging and difficult circumstances of war, the Prophet Muhammad married several women during this period of his life. All of the women he took as wives were either widowed or divorced, except Aisha.<sup>154</sup> A year after the Battle of Allies (Trench) in 628 CE, the Prophet and fifteen hundred of his companions left for Mecca to perform the annual pilgrimage. Unfortunately, they were barred from approaching Mecca by the Quraysh at a place called, 'Hudaybiya', where following some negotiations a treaty was signed, allowing for the Muslims to come for the performance of the pilgrimage the following year and to allow for ten years of peace. This treaty facilitated the growth and spread of Islam amongst the people of the whole region without interference. Many delegations from all regions of Arabia came to the Prophet to investigate the teachings of Islam. A large number of people accepted Islam within a couple of years. The Prophet sent many of his companions to the new Muslim communities in order to instruct them about the practices of Islam. Approximately two years after the signing of the treaty of Hudaybiya, the polytheists broke the treaty by attacking a tribe under the protection of the Muslims. This resulted in the Prophet's decision to conquer Mecca.

After confirming all the reports of the attack and the following subsequent events relating to his ally, the Prophet marched to Mecca with an army consisting of three thousand Muslims of Medina. Muslims from other Arab communities also joined the Prophet on the way to Mecca bringing the total of the armed forces up to ten thousand Muslims. Before entering the city, the Prophet sent word to the residents of Mecca informing them that anyone who remained in their own home, or in Abu Sufyan's home, or in the Kaba, would be safe from the attack of the Muslim army. The army entered Mecca without fighting and the Prophet went directly to the Kaba. The Kaba was then cleansed by the removal of all three hundred and six-

154. The Prophet married Umm Salama (ranha) in 626 CE. Her husband had died of wounds inflicted in the Battle of Uhud (625 CE). The Prophet's marriage contract with Umm Habibah (ranha) was solemnized, by proxy, by Negus, King of Abyssinia, in 628 CE. Two of his wives, Juwayriah and Safiyah, were prisoners of war.



ty idols; it was restored to its pristine status of only being used for the worship of the One True God. The people of the city expected general slaughter in view of their persecution and torture of the Muslims for the past twenty years. However, much to their surprise, standing by the Kaba, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), forgave them all by saying, *“I will treat you as Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph) treated his brothers. There is no reproach against you. Go to your homes, and you are all free.”* The tolerance shown during this expedition proved beyond doubt, that Islam is indeed a religion of peace; the strategy utilized was a stroke of masterpiece, since, it ensured the conquest of the people’s hearts more than the conquest of a city. Within a year (630 CE), almost all of Arabia accepted Islam.



### **SPREAD OF ISLAM AND THE FAREWELL**

At the time the Prophet passed on in 632 CE, Islam had become well established as the main religion of the Arabian Peninsula and it had made inroads into neighboring regions; Muslims had become a major force to be reckoned with in the area. The great change in Arabia alarmed both the Byzantines and the Persians. Their governors, particularly those of the Byzantines, reacted with threats to attack Medina. Instead of waiting for an attack, the Prophet sent a small army to defend the northern most border of Arabia. During the remaining lifetime of the Prophet, all the major battles were fought at the northern front. The Prophet did not have a standing army; whenever he received a threat, he assembled the Muslims, discussed the situation with them and gathered volunteers to fight any act of aggression. During the Prophet’s own life time, Islam began to grow as the faith of the people living on both sides of the borderlands, between Arabia and the Byzantine and the Persian Empires. The Prophet’s followers faithfully carried the message of Islam to all these lands and within the time period of ninety years, the light of Islam had already reached Spain, North Africa, the Caucasus, northwest China and India.

According to the sources, it is reported that, it was during this period in 632 CE, that the Prophet performed his first and last pilgrimage. One hundred and twenty-thousand men and women performed pilgrimage that year with him. The Prophet received the last revelation during this pilgrimage and gave his farewell sermon. Two months later, the Prophet Muhammad (s) fell ill in Medina and after



several days died, on Monday the twelfth of *Rabi al-Awwal*, in the eleventh year after Hijrah (June 8, 632 CE). He is buried at the same place where he died. Prophet Muhammad lived an extremely simple, austere and modest life. He was an immensely devoted man who spent one- to two-thirds of every night in prayer and meditation. The Prophet's possessions consisted only of mats, blankets, jugs and other simple things, even though at the time he was the virtual ruler of Arabia. He left nothing to be inherited except a white mule,

a little ammunition and a piece of land that he had bestowed as gift during his life time. Some of his last words were, "*We the community of Prophets is not inherited. Whatever we leave is for charity.*" Truly, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was a man, a messenger of Allah and the last of His prophets.<sup>155</sup>

155. For further detailed reading about the life of Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) please read, Martin Lings, *Life of the Prophet Muhammad; based upon the earliest sources*, Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 1997.



## THE SOURCES OF ISLAM

## THE SOURCES OF ISLAM

### THE QUR'AN: THE WORD OF ALLAH

The root meaning of the Arabic word 'Qur'an' means both 'recitation' and 'reading' in English. In its inception, the revelation of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), was heard by the Muslims through oral recitation; it formed an essential part of both the liturgical and the spiritual acts of personal and communal worship in Islam. This is largely due to the fact that the Arabian society of that time was mainly an oral society. Later on, the revelation i.e. the Qur'an was written down and read from a text as well as being recited from memory. In the history of the Arabic language, the Qur'an was the first oral discourse to be described by its own text as a book. For the new Muslim it is pertinent to know that the Qur'an as the Word of God, -its vocabulary, its grammar, its law, its theology, and its ethics-is to be studied with the utmost reverence and diligence. The Arabic word for revelation is '*wahy*'. For the new Muslim it is also essential to know that the Qur'an as *wahy* has never been considered to be the consequence of the Prophet's mind, but rather it is seen as a transmission, without any alteration of form or meaning, from God to the Prophet. Furthermore, it is through the recitation and the listening of the Qur'an, whether it is during the ritual prayer or a host of other contexts that, Muslims today chiefly continue to deal with the Holy Scripture. It is also true that majority of the contemporary Muslims do not understand the Arabic language and, therefore, use translations to understand the Noble Scripture. However, it is still important for New Muslims to acquaint themselves with the Qur'an by listening to the various Arabic recitations available through digital media over the Internet. One of the main reasons for listening to the Qur'an in Arabic is

that, the revelation is truly spiritual in its original form and many Muslim people across the ages have attested to the instantaneous power and the value of the properly recited Qur'an. Moreover, it is recommended by scholars of Islam for all Muslims, to learn at least the basic Arabic language and the Qur'anic recitation rules, so that they are able to recite the Qur'an in its original language.





The Qur'an has 114 suras (chapters) and over 6,000 *ayāt* (verses). The chapters of the Qur'an vary greatly in length, for example; the shortest suras (103, 108, and 110) consist of three verses each, the longest sura (2) consists of 286 verses, and yet many more are medium sized. The length of verses also varies considerably. In many printed copies of the Qur'an, each chapter is identified as having been revealed either in the city of Mecca or in the city of Medina and is, accordingly, known as Meccan or Medinan. These designations relate to the first thirteen years of the Prophet's life in Mecca and the last ten years of his prophethood in Medina, as mentioned in the above chapter. In most cases, the Meccan revelations deal with matters of faith and ethics, such as, the fundamentals of Islamic dogma and the principles of ethics; in contrast most of the Medinan revelations deal with the political, social and economic aspects of Muslim life in the light that during this period the Muslims had developed their own independent city in Medina. However, generally such distinction of theme is not always accurate, since, at times Medinan suras frequently take up the themes of faith and ethics, using them as a base for presenting legislative verses, whereas, the Meccan suras contain references to regarding the future events in Medina.

Generally, it can be said that the Qur'an contains numerous injunctions as well. For example, there are broad guidelines for family life, through rules set down for marriage and divorce (Qur'an 2:221, 229–237, 240–241; 4:3, 19–25, 35, 128–129; 5:5; 24:3, 32), for inheritance (Qur'an 2:180, 4:7–9, 11–12, 176), and for making transactions (Qur'an 2:282). In addition, in the Qur'an Muslims are also informed with regards to what is accepted as lawful food and unlawful food (Qur'an 2:168, 172–173; 5:3–5; 6:118–119, 121, 145–146; 16:114–116), decrees concerning punishments for certain offenses (Qur'an 5:38; 17:32; 24:2–9), and general guidelines for running a Muslim society (Qur'an 4:59; 42:38). Furthermore, there are also verses in the Qur'an, whereby, Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, insists that Muslims should treat parents kindly (Qur'an 17:23; 29:8; 31:14; 46:15), He promotes virtues like forbearance and repaying good for evil (Qur'an 23:96; 28:54; 41:34; 42:37, 40; 7:199), and forbids backbiting and slander (Qur'an 24:4, 6–9). The ultimate goal of all such injunctions is to create a God conscious society and individuals.

At this point it is also important for the new Muslim to know how the Qur'an was compiled. Accordingly, the compilation of the Qur'an occurred in three stages. The first stage occurred during the Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings be upon him) lifetime and it included both text and structure, as we find it today. It is reported that when a revelation came to him from Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, it was devotedly memorized by the Muslims and some of these revelations were written down by designated scribes under the Prophet's instructions. Since paper was not available, rudimentary parchment, thin flat stones, or animal



shoulder bones were used. It is reported that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) recited, through memory, the whole Qur'an to the angel Gabriel before passing on, moreover, during the same time a number of his companions also recited the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad. This indicates that, both the text and the structure of the Qur'an, was well known through memorization. Today, the arrangement of the Qur'an follows the same arrangement that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon

him), himself approved under the guidance of the Angel Gabriel. The second stage of the compilation of the Qur'an took place a year after the death of the Prophet in 633 CE, during the reign of the first caliph of Islam, Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr was advised that there was a need to have a written compilation of the Qur'an because many of those who had memorized the Qur'an had been martyred on the battlefield. Abu Bakr accepted the suggestion to prepare a compilation of the Qur'an that differed from the memorized version only in one respect; that of being written down on loose papers. This compilation became known as *sahifa*. The third stage of compiling the Qur'an took place during the rule of the third caliph of Islam, Uthman bin Affan (644–656 CE). This compilation transpired due to variations in the oral and the written copies of the Qur'an beginning to occur in the periphery of the Caliphate; thus, by using the *sahifa*, Caliph Uthman produced the definitive copy of the Qur'an (*ṣuḥuf*) that is read by all Muslims today. Copies of this written scripture were sent to all the major cities of the Islamic world so that they might serve as master copies for people to use as standard reference texts. Hence, both the text and structure of the Qur'an is sacrosanct.

The reciting of the Qur'an takes place throughout Muslim society the world over; it transpires in the everyday lives of Muslims globally. Various forms of recitation take place at different times and on different occasions, such as, during the performance of prayers, on the occasions of birth, death, holy days, festivals, marriage and illness etcetera. One of the most significant of these forms is the everyday usage of phrases, such as, “if God wills” (*Insha'Allah*), “what God wills” (*Ma-sha'Allah*), or the even more widespread recitation of *bismillah al-Rahman Al-Rahem* (In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate) before eating, or initiating virtually any act. In addition there are many other examples of the Qur'an being recited in Muslim society, such as, during prayers at the places of burial, while visiting the graves of the departed, the automatic recitation of the

standard blessings after any mention of Muhammad or other prophets (peace and blessings be upon them all), the widespread use of prayer beads for the recitation of the divine names and other invocations found in the Holy Book. As a text, the Qur'an initially addresses the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), but at the same time, it also speaks to each of its reciter and listener. The impression is that the person reading or listening to the Word of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, is being asked to both recognize and remember the truth. The reciting of the Qur'an and the understanding of it, should overtime, lead the new Muslim to form a relationship of the lifelong process of familiarization and recollection, between the experiences of one's own life and that of the corresponding lessons and insights conveyed to one by the verses of the Qur'an. Perhaps, this is the reason that some sages of Islam have said, "Recite and read the Qur'an as it is the mirror of your soul and seek to understand each verse as though it were being revealed directly to you."

At this juncture it is vital to highlight to the new Muslim and caution him or her from presuming that any independent and highly individualized scriptural interpretation, based exclusively on foreign language translations, (which in the contemporary world is taken for granted), is acceptable within the scholarship of Islam. In fact, the scholarly understanding of the Qur'an has for centuries been the preserve of the *ulama*; being a part of this intellectual scholarship, demands mastery in a number of related preparatory and interpretive religious sciences, requiring years of preparation. These essential contextual disciplines include; Qur'anic grammar and syntax, Arabic lexicography and philology, Qur'anic rhetoric (*balagha*), Hadith, history (*sirah*, *tarikh*, and *qisas al-anbiya*), literatures concerning the historical contexts of the Qur'anic revelations (*asbab al-nuzul* and *tafsir*), dialectical theology (*ilm al-kalam*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Thus, the studying of the Qur'an and its interpretation has always been mediated by the traditional religious disciplines, which have their origins in the essential teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. This leads us to the fact that the symbiotic relationship between the Qur'an and the thousands of Prophetic teachings (*Sunnah*) recorded in the collections of Hadith continues to have an importance in the everyday lives of Muslims.

### **SUNNAH: THE PROPHET'S TRADITIONS**

All of the prophets were people who submitted to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted; they were chosen in order to guide human beings and to teach them how to fully submit to God. Although the prophets were chosen from different places, at different times throughout human history and they conveyed their message to people in various languages, their mission was the one and the same. Expounding upon this universality of the prophets and his role within it, the Proph-



et Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “*The similitude of mine and that of the Apostles before me is that of a person who built a house quite imposing and beautiful, but for one brick in one of its corners. People would go round it, appreciating the building, but saying: Why has the brick not been fixed here? He said: I am that brick and I am the last of the Apostles.*”<sup>156</sup> Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, prescribed that the example of perfect faith, is the belief in Him and then in His Messenger. For if a person

believes only in [God] and not in His Messenger, they cannot be described as one who has perfect faith’; they must have faith in His Messenger together with Him... God has imposed the duty upon men and women to obey His divine communications, as well as, follow the Sunnah of His Messenger.

The term ‘*Sunnah*’ is an Arabic word, which, in pre-Islamic times, linguistically meant, ‘path’ or ‘custom’ relating to the norms and the practices of an individual or a people. During Prophet Muhammad’s (peace and blessings be upon him) own life time, the *Sunnah* began to be understood exclusively as the way of the Prophet, embodied in what he said, did, and what he approved of through explicit or tacit confirmation. Narrations regarding his physical appearance and his attributes were also included in *hadith* collections. In scholarship, ‘*hadith*’ is described as the verbal expression of the Prophet’s *Sunnah*. Hence, for example, the manner in which to perform various acts of worship mentioned in the Qur’an, such as, ritual prayer, fasting, charity and pilgrimage etcetera are learnt by Muslims from the hadith and practice of the Prophet. Muslims scholars have always appealed to the *Sunnah* as the second source of Islam after the Noble Qur’an. The Prophet’s way (Sunnah) can be found across the total spectrum of Shari’ah, from the obligatory (*wājib*) to the forbidden (*hārām*). This Sunnah is preserved in both the Qur’an and the Hadith. The term *Sunnah* is further utilized for two auxiliary purposes; it is utilized by legal theorists in jurisprudence to denote acts of worship that are not obligatory in Islam, but are recommended (*mandūb*)<sup>157</sup> and it is also utilized to refer to the textual source of Hadith, in contrast with the Book (the Qur’an).<sup>158</sup> Hence, the *Sunnah* is

156. Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 43, Hadith 24.

157. i.e. meaning an act that is rewarded for in the afterlife, however not doing such an act (*mandūb/Sunnah*) is not punished. In this context in Islamic Law it is contrasted with the obligatory act which is rewarded for in the next life and not acting on it leads to punishment in the next life.

158. i.e. it is synonymous with Hadith, and distinguish evidence from that of the Qur’an. However, it is important to note that rulings of what is obligatory (*Fard/Wājib*) and recommended (*Sunnah/*



the way of the Prophet and in general has been understood by Muslims to mean the imitation of the precedents set by the Prophet. "It is reported that Yazid ibn Yabnus said, 'We went to Aisha and said, 'Umm al-Muminin, what was the character of the Messenger of Allah like?' She replied, 'His character was the Qur'an'."'<sup>159</sup>

It is evident that the *Sunnah*, as a whole, is binding in Islam. In the Qur'an it is stated, *"It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger to have any option about their decision: if any one disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed clearly on a wrong Path."*<sup>160</sup> The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) even warned his followers from establishing rulings in religion by willfully ignoring universal principles brought by the *Sunnah*, and, instead claim that the Qur'an is enough for them. He (peace and blessings be upon him) said, *"Let me not find one of you reclining on his couch when he hears something regarding me which I have commanded or forbidden and saying: We do not know. We follow (only) what we found in Allah's Book."*<sup>161</sup> Therefore, the *Sunnah* is an indispensable part of religion and in this respect; one cannot refer to the Qur'an without the *Sunnah*, just as one cannot consider the *Sunnah* without the Qur'an.

Nevertheless, it is important for the new Muslim to recognize that the *Sunnah* is not the equivalent of the Qur'an in terms of its significance; in other words, the Qur'an is binding in all its totality, regarding its various commandments and injunctions. In contrast, the *Sunnah* due to its very nature is not binding in its entirety. For example, the *hadith* concerning matters, such as, law, ritual prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and almsgiving etcetera are binding, due to the fact that statements by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), regarding such matters are related to his task of prophethood (*risala*). Whereas, his statements regarding fields that require specialist expertise, such as, agriculture, trade, treatment of diseases, art, etcetera are not mandatory unless they contain a divine message. In addition, the Prophet's personal actions carried out as a human being, such as, his habits regarding eating, drinking, dressing, sleeping etcetera are not binding, however, Muslims should recognize that such actions of the



*mandūb*) are found both in the Qur'an as well as in the Hadith.

159. Sahih al-Bukhari, 14: 308.

160. Q. 33: 36.

161. Abu Dawud, *Sunnah*, 5; Al-Tirmidhi, *Ilm*, 10



Prophet constitute a high ethical and moral code of conduct and should be incorporated in their own lives.<sup>162</sup>

Finally, the new Muslim should keep these following three Prophetic traditions in mind concerning the *Sunnah*: “He who does not follow my tradition in religion is not from me.”<sup>163</sup> “Whoever revives my *Sunnah* has loved me, and whosoever loved me, he shall be with me in Paradise”<sup>164</sup>, and, “There are three qualities for which anyone who is characterized by them will relish the sweetness of faith: He to whom Allah and His Messenger are dearer than all else; He who loves another human being for Allah’s sake alone; and He who has as great an abhorrence of returning to unbelief after Allah has rescued him from it as he has of being cast into Hell.”<sup>165</sup>

*characterized by them will relish the sweetness of faith: He to whom Allah and His Messenger are dearer than all else; He who loves another human being for Allah’s sake alone; and He who has as great an abhorrence of returning to unbelief after Allah has rescued him from it as he has of being cast into Hell.”*<sup>165</sup>

162. For further detail reading about the *Sunnah* and *hadith* please read E. M. Yaşaroğlu, İ. Erkul and N. Morgül, *Hadith*, İstanbul: Erkam Publications, 2016.

163. Sahih al-Bukhari, Nikah, 1; Muslim, Nikah, 5.

164. Sahih al-Tirmidhi, Ilm, 16

165. Sahih al-Bukhari, Iman 9, 14; Muslim, Iman 67



FAMILY LIFE

## FAMILY LIFE

### MARRIAGE AND HOUSEHOLD

The importance and virtue of family life is highly recognized in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Marriage is a legally binding contract between a man and a woman, which establishes the lawful relationship between them as spouses, with a mutual commitment to live together according to the teachings of Islam. Allah says in the Qur'an, *"Oh, humankind, be careful of your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate, and from the two of them spread abroad a multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty to God in whom you claim (your rights) of one another, and toward the wombs. Verily, God is Watcher over you."*<sup>166</sup> It is important for the new Muslim man to know that if he is already married to a woman that belongs to the People of the Book, such as, Judaism or Christianity, then their marriage is still valid. However, if the woman belongs to a religion not designated as People of the Book, then their marriage can only be validated by her also becoming a Muslim. Whereas, for the female new Muslim who is already married to a non-Muslim man, her marriage can only be validated if her husband also accepts Islam as his faith, otherwise, the female Muslim is not allowed to stay married to a non-Muslim man, no matter if he is of the people of the Book. The reason for this is that Islam assigns the responsibility of both the moral wellbeing and the finances of the family unit, to the male and he is held accountable for the support and the maintenance of the female, their offspring and even other female relatives. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says in the Qur'an, *"Men are responsible for women because Allah has given the one more than the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). Virtuous women are therefore obedient, guarding in their (husbands') absence that which Allah has guarded."*<sup>167</sup>

Moreover, a man must have a lawful source of income in order to support his family and, it is for this reason that Islam's inheritance law insists on men inheriting a larger share than women. However, it is important to remember the following Qur'anic verse in this context, *"Your wives are a garment for you and you are a garment for them"*<sup>168</sup> This indicates that the wife is her husband's companion, who is, together with him, responsible for the affairs of the household, the physical and

166. Q. 4:1

167. Q. 4:34

168. Q. 2:187



emotional well-being of its members, and the instruction of the children. The tone of marriage in Islam is, thus, one of mutual respect, kindness, love, companionship and harmonious interaction. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says in the Qur'an, *"And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect."*<sup>169</sup>



At this juncture it is important to reiterate the fact that in Islam, a woman, whether married or single, is recognized as a person in her own right, not merely as an optional extra to her husband. She has the full right to work even after her marriage; she has full ownership of her property and the right to dispose of her property and earnings as she wishes. Furthermore, if she so desires, she has the right to retain her own maiden name, instead of taking that of her husband. If she wishes to, she is permitted to spend her own finances on her family; however, she is not obligated in any way to do so. On the other hand, family expenses and lifestyle should be regulated according to the husband's level of income. It is not right for a wife and the children to ask more from a man than he earns or can manage with ease, since; the husband is only responsible to provide for the food, the clothing and the housing of his family according to the extent of his income. It is for this reason that most schools of law have recommended that men and women should try to get married according to their social compatibility. Thus, it is better for a woman or a man to marry someone who has a similar financial status, similar social manners and customs, and similar level of intellect. In this manner, a family may be able to avoid the pitfalls that arise from disputes rooted in differences regarding social status, such as, the standard of living or the social cultures that divide the families of the husband and the wife. Of course, it is possible that mutual love can overcome all differences and prevent any resulting disputes and arguments, but this is not always the case. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), said the following about finding the appropriate spouse, *"A woman is married for four things: her wealth, her family status, her beauty and her religion. Try to marry the one who is religious; may your hand be scented with goodness!"*<sup>170</sup> As can be deduced from this tradition, such teachings are also applicable to a woman who wants to marry a man.

169. Q. 30:121

170. Sahih al-Bukhari, Nikah, VI, 123.

The religion of Islam recognizes that men and women have different natures, strengths and weaknesses. Based upon this fact it assigns different, but complementary roles to men and women within society. For example, a woman is the mother and is therefore responsible for both the children and the household. However, it is recognized as good conduct for a husband and a wife to consult each other regarding family matters and assist one another in their complementary roles. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, *“The best of you is the one who is best in his treatment of women.”*<sup>171</sup> It should also be noted that male authority in the family does not give any man the right to use brute force, nor should it be considered that the woman’s role is equivalent to servitude. If both men and women pursue their traditional roles in the family in accordance with the principles of Islam, there will neither be an oppressor or an oppressed in the family. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), expressed the significance of women’s rights during his farewell sermon, *“O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regards to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah’s trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right, then to them belongs the right to be provided with kind-heartedness, their sustenance and attires. Do treat your women well and be kind to them, for they are your companions and committed supporters. Moreover, it is your right that they do not make friends with anyone of whom you do not approve, as well as never be unchaste.”*

A contemporary issue that is often debated a great deal these days is the allowance for men to marry up to four wives in Islam. However, it is important to note that the allowance for such a limited polygamy is neither a recommendation, an encouragement, nor is it a blanket permission. Rather the act of contracting marriage with more than one woman is dependent upon the man being able to observe meticulous fairness amongst all his wives. Allah says in the Qur’an, *“... Marry of the women who seem good to you two or three or four. And if you fear that you cannot do justice...”*<sup>172</sup> and, *“You will not be able to deal equally between wives however much you desire (to do so). But (if you have more than one wife) do not turn altogether away (from one), leaving her as in suspense . . . .”*<sup>173</sup> This means that the



171. Sahih al-Tirmidhi, Rada, 11. Abu Dawud, Sunnah, 15; Ibn Maja, Nikah, 50

172. Q. 4:3

173. Q. 4:129

husband is obligated to provide each of the wives with equal facilities and maintenance, spend an equal amount of time with each one and not make them feel as if he prefers one to the other. Due to the difficulty of such a task and the variety of cultures in the Muslim world, the majority of the Muslim men today are only married to one wife at a time. It is important to note that, Islam as a faith recognized the needs of women and created a system, whereby they did not need to live alone and to carry all the economic and other

burdens of life on their shoulders; they did not need to spend their lives without the love and the care of a husband or the blessings of bearing children. Moreover, certain unusual situations, such as, barrenness or chronic illness in a woman may make marrying more than one wife desirable. The permission for plural marriages has been given partly in order to provide a home and maintenance for every woman in the society, and partly in order to make provision for other exceptional situations.



This leads us to the issue of Muslim offspring resulting from marriage. It is important for parents to understand that any child that they have is a divine trust and not their property. This means that upon the birth of the child, the parents are obligated to raise him or her in the best manner possible and to teach them about Islam. It is *Sunnah* for the father to recite the *adhan* softly in the ear of the new-born child. Moreover, the birth of a child in Islam is commonly followed by the slaughter of an animal, which is shared out amongst family, friends and the poor. This act is also a *Sunnah*, whereby the family demonstrate their thankfulness to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. It is also important to note that a male child must be circumcised; this is part of the *Sunnah of Ibrahim*. It is the right of the child, male or female, to have a good name, because the meaning of the name influences the personality of the child. The name can be from any culture or language, but it is common practice for many Muslims to find their child's name from the Qur'an, or name them after the Prophet's family or his companions, or someone from Muslim history.

It is a well known fact in Islam that the mother is the first educator of a child, followed by his or her father. When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), was asked who was most entitled to be treated with the highest respect, he said three times, "Your mother" and only after that did he say, "Your father."<sup>174</sup> It is the

174. Sahih al-Bukhari, *Adab*, 2; Muslim, *Birr*, 1, 2

responsibility of the parents to provide a loving environment for the children, an environment consisting not only of discipline, but also affection. It is reported that one day the Prophet was playing with his grandsons and kissing them. A Bedouin came up to him and remarked, “You (people) kiss the children! We do not kiss them”, the Prophet replied, *“I cannot put mercy in your heart after Allah has taken it away from it.”*<sup>175</sup> Islam teaches the same affinity, kindness and love between all close relations, especially, for parents when they become elderly. For new Muslims it is important to know that blood relatives, in particular, still have rights over them. Thus, a new Muslim should still show respect and love for their father, mother, siblings, and grandparents and so on, even if they are not Muslims. It is important to note that it is acceptable to partake in social events with non-Muslim family members, as long as, it does not contradict the teachings and principles of Islam. In cases of doubt, the new Muslim should always remember the following verse; *“Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for your Lord knows best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance.”*<sup>176</sup>

## DIVORCE

Although divorce is permissible in Islam, the Prophet (peace and blessings be on him), said that of all the things which Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has permitted, divorce is the most disliked by Him. This in itself points to the grave undesirability of divorce except as a last resort, when all means of reconciliation between husband and wife have failed. Such means include the attempts of relatives and friends to mediate between the two spouses in order to help them resolve their differences. Furthermore, effective safeguards are also built into the divorce procedure, so that at any stage short of the final pronouncement, reconciliation between the two parties can still take place. It is also important to note that for a man to divorce a woman merely for his own convenience and pleasure, is considered repressive and a great sin.

According to Islamic Law there are three methods in which a marriage is dissolved. The first is ‘*talaaq*’ by the husband, commonly translated as divorce. This consists of a single pronouncement of divorce made by the husband. After this pronouncement, the wife enters into a waiting period of approximately three months, during which time they may simply reunite as husband and wife. Such a pronouncement may be made a further two times again by the husband; reconciliation after

175. Sahih al-Bukhari, Adab, 22

176. Q. 16:125



the second pronouncement is possible, however, after the third pronouncement of *talaq*, reunification during the waiting period is no longer permissible and the couple must separate completely. The second form of divorce in Islam is known as '*khula*'. This is where the wife requests the husband to release her from the marriage in exchange for something that she offers, for example, she may offer to return the dower in exchange for ending the marriage. The third form of divorce is where the husband is not meeting the rights of the wife and therefore, she turns to the court to end the marriage.



Marriages in Islam are contracts and hence, there are legal provisions for terminating contracts when necessary. Every agreement can be superseded by another agreement. Obviously, divorce is not a desired goal or a light matter in Islam and in a flawless world, all married couples would live in bliss. However, there are times in which this option of divorce is the best for all parties concerned. If there was no way out of a failed marriage, the couple's life would be torture; this is why Islam allows divorce because in certain cases divorce is not only desirable, but also essential.<sup>177</sup>

177. For further detail reading about family life in Islam please read Osman Nuri Topbaş, *A Peaceful Home: Paradise on Earth*, İstanbul: Erkam Publications, 2015.





## THE MUSLIM CALENDAR

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Muslims have two major festivals in Islam. One marks the end of the month of fasting (*Eid al-Fitr*) and the other marks the Prophet Abraham's sacrifice (*Eid al-Adha*) at the end of the pilgrimage season. These festivals consist of certain acts of worship, which distinguish them from any other days in the calendar. These two special days are linked to two special periods; the first one to the month of Ramadan and the other one to the days of pilgrimage. The Muslims, who spend the month of Ramadan fasting, observing prayers and giving charity, celebrate their individual accomplishments with joy and happiness on the occasion of *Eid al-Fitr*. Whereas, *Eid al Adha* is celebrated at the end of the pilgrimage season, when the Muslims commemorate the memory of Abraham's sacrifice, and rejoice after the completion of the communal yearly pilgrimage. It was Allah's Messenger's tradition to take a bath and perform the major ablution on festival days, as he did so on Fridays.<sup>178</sup> Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him), said, "*Ramadan is the day the people start fasting, the festival is the day that the people break their fast, and the festival of sacrifice is the day the people sacrifice.*"<sup>179</sup>

In addition to these two festivals, Muslims also celebrate numerous other events, such as, the Friday Congregational Prayer, the Night of Power (*Laylat al-Qadr*) during the month of Ramadan, the first day of the month of Muharram, which is the first day of the Islamic year and marks the date of the Prophet's migration (*Hijrah*) from Mecca to Medina; it constitutes the most important date for Islam because it signaled the actual beginning of the Muslim *ummah* as an independent unit. Other days of observance include, *Al-Isra wa al-Miraj*, which is celebrated

on the twenty seventh Day of Rajab, and marks the Prophet's journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and the Heavenly sphere. *Mawlid al-Nabi* falls on the twelfth of Rabi al-Awwal, and it is the celebration of the Prophet's birthday. The day of Ashura on the tenth of Muharram is celebrated in memory of the exodus of the Prophet Moses from Egypt. All of these occasions are observed throughout the various Muslim cultures the world over, by enjoying a variety of sweet dishes and cele-



178. Ibn Hanbal, 4, 79.

179. Al-Tirmidhi, Sawm, 11.



brations. However, it is important to recognize that only the two major festivals of Islam i.e. the two Eids and *Jumu'ah* (Friday) have structured ritual prayers.

## FRIDAY

The gathering of Muslims in one place and turning towards the same direction is in itself a festival, and so every Friday ritual prayer, which gathers all Muslims at the same place, has been effective in defining the term festival in Islam.<sup>180</sup> Therefore, for those who pray the *Jumu'ah* prayer, the Friday congregation is the weekly religious festival of the Muslim community. For this reason, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), disliked fasting on Friday, unless it was combined with Thursday or Saturday, or it occurred during the month of Ramadan.<sup>181</sup> The first Friday ritual prayer in Islamic history was performed at the Bani Salim Mosque, when the Prophet Muhammad stopped on the way, while emigrating from Mecca to Medina.<sup>182</sup> The *Jumu'ah* prayer is obligatory upon all adult Muslim men, who are religiously and legally responsible, and are present at their area of residence. However, if a person is on a journey, then the Friday prayer is not obligatory on him, nor is it obligatory for those who are either ill or elderly, and are unable to reach the mosque. Thus, when the *adhan* is called, it is required for all those adult men, who are legally responsible in Islam, to perform the Friday prayer. Allah says in the Qur'an, "*O you who believe, when [the adhan] is called for the prayer on the day of Jumu'ah [Friday], then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade [any work]. That is better for you, if you only knew.*"<sup>183</sup> Once Allah's Messenger addressed the congregation after the sermon of a Friday Prayer with the following words; "*O Society of Muslims! God has made this day a festival day (Eid) so perform major ablution (ghusl), and it will not harm whoever has perfume to wear some of it, and use a tooth-stick.*"<sup>184</sup> It was the Prophet's tradition to take a bath and perform major ablution on Fridays.<sup>185</sup> The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), said, "*If anyone takes a bath*



180. Ibn Maja, Iqama, 83; al-Tirmidhi, Tafsir al-Qur'an, 5.

181. Sahih al-Bukhari, sawm 63; Sahih Muslim, siyam 145, 146

182. Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqat*, 3, 118.

183. Q. 62: 9

184. Al-Muwatta', Tahara, 32.

185. Ibn Hanbal, 4, 79.

on Friday, puts on his best clothes, applies a touch of perfume if he has any, then goes to congregational prayer (in the mosque), and takes care not to step over people, then prays what Allah has prescribes for him, then keeps silent from the time the Imam comes out until he finishes his prayer, it will atone for his sins during the previous week.”<sup>186</sup> It is important for New Muslims to be aware of the rule of silence while the Imam is giving his sermon. It is not permissible to speak to others, even if is to tell them to be quiet. It is reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said; *“If you say to your companion when the imam is giving his sermon on a Friday, ‘Be quiet and listen,’ you have engaged in idle talk.”*<sup>187</sup> It is also important to remember that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), said; *“The five (daily) ritual prayers and from one Friday prayer to the (next) Friday ritual prayer, and from Ramadan to Ramadan are expiations for the (sins) committed in between (their intervals) provided one shuns the major sins.”*<sup>188</sup>

## THE RAMADAN FESTIVAL

When the Prophet came to Medina in 623 C.E, he encountered the people celebrating two days of the year with ceremonies and entertainment. Anas, (may Allah be pleased with him) who was a boy at that time, reported; “When the Messenger of Allah came to Medina, the people had two days on which they engaged in games, so he asked them; *“what is the significance of these two days?”* The people replied that these were the days that they had celebrated since the pre-Islamic period. The Messenger of Allah then said; *“Allah has substituted for them something better, the day of sacrifice and the day of the breaking of the fast.”*<sup>189</sup> *Eid al-Fitr* is the festival which marks the end of Ramadan; it takes place on the first day of the lunar month of Shawwal, and its celebration extends to a period of three days. On the morning of *Eid al-Fitr*, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), would not leave for the ritual Eid prayer until he had sweetened his mouth with a couple of dates.<sup>190</sup> For Muslims, this *Sunnah* of the Prophet became influential in the development of the custom of making sweets and desserts and offering them to guests on Eid. Since the festival days are celebrated by eating together and offering food to others, the Prophet prohibited fasting on these days.<sup>191</sup> The occasion of *Eid-al-Fitr* is a time of great joy and thankfulness for Muslims because they have completed their obligation of fasting. The festival is characterized by a morning *salah* just after

186. Abu Dawud, Tahara, 127.

187. Al-Bukhari, 892; Muslim, 851

188. Sahih Muslim, al-Tahara, 16.

189. Abu Dawud, Salat, 239; Al-Nasai, 'Idayn, 1.

190. Ibn Maja, Siyam, 49.

191. Sahih al-Bukhari, Savm, 67; Sahih Muslim, Siyam, 142.

sunrise, good food, visiting and exchanging greetings, and, entertainment and joy. It is important to know that it is obligatory to pay a charity called, '*zakat al-Fitr*' before the time of the festival *salah*. *Zakat al-Fitr* is commonly a specified amount of grain or other foodstuff, or alternatively, a sum of money equivalent to the cost of one meal; which is given on behalf of every member of one's family, to the needy Muslims, either directly, or through some Islamic organization. The festival ritual prayer is performed in congrega-



tion. The two cycle prayer following the Imam is *Sunnah mu'akkadah* for those people who are required to perform the Friday prayer. It is known that the Prophet recited additional takbirs during the festival ritual prayers,<sup>192</sup> recited chapter al-'Ala' in the first cycle and chapter al-Ghashiya in the second cycle,<sup>193</sup> and then finally delivered the festival sermon.<sup>194</sup> Normally, every able-bodied male attends these prayers, but the Prophet also urged that all the women should be present even if they are not able to pray due to their monthly indisposition. The first exchange of greetings and wishes for happy holidays, takes place just after the sermon ends.

## THE FESTIVAL OF SACRIFICE

This is the greater of the two major festivals, the period of its celebration extends over four days. This festival marks the annual completion of the *haji*. It falls on the tenth of the month of Dhu al-Hijjah, approximately two-and-a-half months after *Eid al-Fitr*, rotating clockwise around the year and occurring ten days earlier annually, as do all Islamic calendar dates. The Eid prayers are identical to the Eid al-Fitr prayer except that Muslims do not pay *zakat al-Fitr*. However, Muslims recite the *takbīr* after each obligatory unit of prayers, beginning from the day before the festival, at the dawn ritual prayer, all the way until the late afternoon ritual prayer on the fourth day of the festival. The festival of sacrifice is also known as, 'the days of *tashrīq*', because in Arabic the word *tashrīq* is used to refer to the sunrise, which is the time for the ritual festival prayer. Moreover, *tashrīq* also refers to the act of slaughtering an animal for sacrifice and drying its meat under the sun. A further meaning of *tashrīq* is 'light'. Just as the sun illuminates its surroundings, the

192. Al-Darimi, *Salat*, 220; Ibn Maja, *Iqama*, 156.

193. Sahih Muslim, *Jum'a*, 62; Abu Dawud, *Salat*, 234, 236.

194. Sahih al-Bukhari, 'Idayn, 8; Muslim, 'Idayn, 8.



joy of festival opens the hearts of people to each other, which is the reason for calling the sacrificial holiday as the days of *tashrīq*.<sup>195</sup> It is well known that during the sacrificial festival, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) would not eat anything until he came back from the ritual festival prayer.<sup>196</sup> During this day, those who perform *hajj* complete their observance in Mina, with the slaughter of an animal (although this is not a requirement for all pilgrims) and with the termination of their state of *ihram*. Elsewhere, other

Muslims sacrifice animals (this is *Sunnah* rather than obligatory) in commemoration of Prophet Abraham's sacrifice of a sheep in the place of his son Ishmael, as commanded by Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. It is important to know that Allah says concerning sacrifice; "*It is neither their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah: it is your piety that reaches Him*"<sup>197</sup> On the day of *Eid al Adha*, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), first performed the festival prayer and then slaughtered an animal to offer his sacrifice. He is reported to have said, "*Who-soever does so, he acted according to our Sunnah (traditions)*."<sup>198</sup> The meat of the sacrifice is divided into three equal portions—one for the use of the family, one to be given to neighbors and friends, and one to be given away to the poor, to be used as food; the portions which are distributed are given away as meat (not cooked or prepared). This sharing out of the meat constitutes the special charity of this festival, in the place of a monetary one. Apart from these differences, the other aspects of the observance of this festival are identical to those of *Eid al-Fitr*.

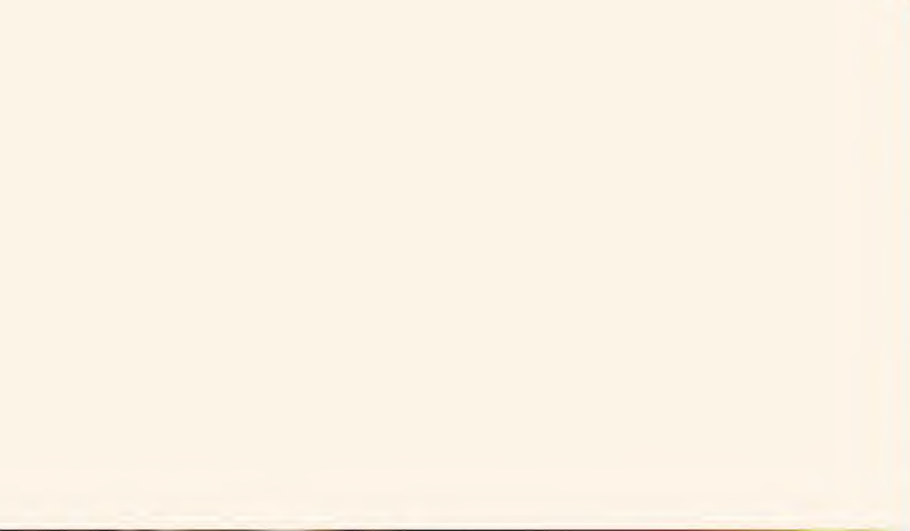
195. Ibn al-Athir, *Nihaya*, II, 464.

196. Ibn Maja, *Siyam*, 49; al-Darimi, *Salat*, 217.

197. Q. 22:37

198. Sahih al-Bukhari, 'Idayn, 3.





RELIGIOUS LIFE

## RELIGIOUS LIFE

### REPENTANCE (TAWBA) IN ISLAM

Repentance (*tawba*) generally means to face the Truth. It signifies the moment when the servant of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, realizes his or her wrongdoing and turns his or her heart towards Allah and sincerely repents. The repentance of the heart that is accompanied by regret and humility is as known as ‘*tawba*’, whereas, the utterance coming from the heart and tongue, to express regret and beg forgiveness from Allah is called, ‘*istighfâr*’. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says in the Qur’an; “...Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.”<sup>199</sup> It is important for the new Muslim to know and apply this wisdom. It is human to err and commit a sin due to weaknesses, but it follows that it is a divine blessing to be able to immediately regret, repent and beg for forgiveness by turning towards Allah. He, may He be glorified and exalted, says; “*And those who, having done something to be ashamed of, or wronged their own souls, earnestly bring Allah to mind, and ask for forgiveness for their sins, -and who can forgive sins except Allah?- and who do not persist in what they have done while they know.*”<sup>200</sup> Hence, one of the main conditions of repentance is not to persist in the wrongdoing, once *tawba* has taken place. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “*Verily, when the servant commits a sin a black spot appears upon his heart. If he abandons the sin, seeks forgiveness, and repents, then his heart will be polished. If he returns to the sin, the blackness will be increased until it overcomes his heart. It is the covering that Allah has*

*mentioned: ‘No, but on their hearts is a covering because of what they have earned.’*”<sup>201</sup>

In other words, sincerity is a condition in repentance and so is the determination not to commit the sin again for which one is currently repenting to one’s Lord.

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, erases sins by the power of his name *al- ‘Afuw*, forgives sins and accepts repentance by the power of his name *al-Ghafur* and *at-Taw-*



199. Q. 2: 222

200. Q. 3: 135

201. Sunan al-Tirmidhî 3334

wab, and covers faults by the power of his name *al-Sattar*. Despite the fact that whatever transpires in the lives of human beings, due to their own individual and collective actions, Allah still forgives<sup>202</sup> because He, may He be glorified and exalted, is all-Merciful and all-Forgiving.<sup>203</sup> That is why Allah asks His sinful servants never to give up hope or to despair.<sup>204</sup> He gave human beings the following glad tidings; “*My mercy prevails over My wrath.*”<sup>205</sup>



The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was a forgiving person and stressed upon the Muslims to exercise forgiveness towards one and all. He said that if a believer makes an error and asks for forgiveness then a pardon should be granted to him.<sup>206</sup> This is because understanding one's own mistake and showing remorse is a virtue. It is reported that one of the companions came to the Prophet and asked: “*O Messenger of Allah! How many times should the servant be pardoned?*” The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was silent. Then he again asked: “*O Messenger of Allah! How many times should the servant be pardoned?*” The Prophet finally replied; “*Seventy times each day*”.<sup>207</sup> Therefore, a new Muslim should know that the atonement for sins plays a significant role in the healthy development of one's religious life. This is why the Prophet (peace be up on him) said; “*Follow an evil deed with a good one to wipe it out*”<sup>208</sup> The things that keep a person away from Allah and are called ‘sin’ or ‘evil’ are usually the results of ignorance and the succumbing to temporary pleasures. The way to in which to alter such a behavior, is to abandon wrong paths, accept mistakes, repent and beg for the forgiveness of Allah, the Almighty, and seek shelter with Him from all evil. In other words, repentance refers to the efforts made in the pursuit of abandoning wrong choices, turning to Allah, and shaping life in accordance with His commands and prohibitions. Repentance is an important spiritual sustenance, which nourishes and enhances a Muslim's religious life. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, does not refuse those who come to Him, seek refuge in Him and repent and ask forgiveness sincerely.

202. Q. 42:30.

203. Q. 2:192.

204. Q. 39:53.

205. Sahih al-Bukhari, al-Tawhid, 22

206. Ibn Maja, al-Adab, 23

207. Sunan al-Tirmidhi, al-Birr, 31; Abu Dawud, al-Adab, 123-124.

208. Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Birr, 55

## FOOD CODE

*Rizq* is a bounty from Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, and therefore all food and drink should be received with the attitude of gratitude. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), was very clear about the status of food and drink in life, when he said that the Muslims are those who do not eat unless they are hungry and when they eat, they do not fill themselves. Moreover, he taught that one third of the stomach is for food, one-third for liquids, and one-third for air. This means that food should be eaten moderately and with a healthy disposition. The new Muslim should know that all good acts, including eating and drinking, should commence with *bismillah ar-rahman ar-raheem* (in the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate). The *Sunnah* includes a number of other invocations, such as; *“Oh Allah, bless us in that which You have provided for us, and shield us from the fire”*. At the end of any meal, small or large, it is *Sunnah* to say; *“Praise be to God, who fed us and gave us drink, and made us Muslims.”* All of this is based upon the knowledge that it is Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, who provides for all His creatures, therefore, wasting food is a sin; as Muslims it is our duty to try to give any leftover food to the needy people or to animals, instead of wasting it by disposing of it in the garbage etcetera.

The Islamic concept of *halal* (permitted) and *haram* (forbidden) foods provides Muslims with some main dietary guidelines. In the Qur'an Allah states; *“[Allah] has only forbidden you carrion and blood and the flesh of swine and anything over which a name other than that of Allah has been invoked. But if one is forced [to eat forbidden foods] by necessity and without willful disobedience nor transgressing due limits, then Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful”*<sup>209</sup> The principle is that whatever is not specifically or by analogy prohibited, is permissible; hence all foods and drinks are allowed except the following which are pro-

hibited in the Qur'an. Allah says; *“Forbidden to you (as food) are carrion and blood and swine flesh, and that which has been dedicated to any other than God and the strangled, and the dead through beating, and the dead through falling from a height, and that which has been killed by (the goring of) horns, and that which has been devoured by wild beasts except that which you make lawful (by killing it while it is still alive), and that which has*



209. Q. 16:115



been immolated to idols...”<sup>210</sup>; “Therefore eat of that on which Allah’s name has been mentioned if you are believers in His verses ”<sup>211</sup>; and, “Do not eat anything over which the name of Allah has not been mentioned. To do so is abomination. The devils inspire their friends to dispute with you. If you obey them, you would then be idolaters.”<sup>212</sup> All seafood is permissible according to the majority of the schools of law.<sup>213</sup> Whereas, anything that intoxicates or interferes with the clear functioning of the mind, in any quantity or form, i.e. alcohol and drugs, are clearly forbidden in Islam. By analogy, birds of prey, animals with claws and fangs, rodents and insects with the exception of locusts are also forbidden to consume in Islam. Nevertheless, for all of these forbidden foods there is an important maxim, which is that Muslims may eat any of these afore mentioned forbidden foods if they are facing starvation and their life is in danger. Furthermore, with the exception of the *haram* food items, most food is permissible, unless a forbidden substance has been processed with it, or if a particular food has been fermented to produce alcoholic content. In addition, Allah encourages Muslims in the Qur’an by saying; “*Eat of the things that Allah has provided for you, lawful and good: but fear Allah in whom you believe*”<sup>214</sup> In this verse of the Qur’an ‘good’ refers to healthy and beneficial, signifying the notion that Muslims should not only consume what is merely *halal* for them, but that their food should also be healthy and beneficial for their physical, spiritual and mental wellbeing.

## DRESS CODE

The new Muslim should be aware that attire in Islam is very much related to the notions of cleanliness, hygiene and respect for the bodies that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, provided for human beings. It is recommended to all Muslims to emulate the Prophet with regards to their personal cleanliness. This includes frequent bathing, keeping the nails and hair trimmed, caring for one’s hair, and making one’s appearance clean and pleasant. Weekly baths before Friday prayers, bathing after sexual relations and menstrual periods, and washing the private parts with water after using the toilet are recognized Islamic requirements for personal hygiene. Therefore, on that basis, Muslims are required to pay attention to their attire making sure that their clothing is good and clean. As noted in an earlier chapter, the cleanliness and the ritual purification of the body is a prerequisite for the performance of the *salah*. In relation to the notion of respect for the human

210. Q. 5:4, and 2:173, 6:145, 16:115

211. Q. 6:118

212. Q. 6:121

213. Hanafi law does not allow such seafood as crabs, prawn and lobster.

214. Q. 2:172



body in Islam, Islam does have a dress code but it is important to know that there are no explicit rules in Islam with regards to wearing any specific cultural or national attire. Instead, the rules of attire in Islam are linked to the concepts of modesty and integrity. Allah states; *“He has made shelters for you in the mountains and He has made garments for you to protect you from the heat and garments to protect you from each other’s violence. In that way He perfects His blessing on you so that hopefully you may devote yourselves*

*to Him”*<sup>215</sup> and, *“Children of Adam, We have given you garments to cover your nakedness and as adornment for you; the garment of God-consciousness is the best of all garments– this is one of God’s signs, so that people may take heed.”*<sup>216</sup> Hence, human beings are informed that they wear their attire to cover their body, to adorn themselves, and to protect themselves against the elements, however, the most important aspect of attire is piety. In other words, the most important aspect of the dress code in Islam is *ḥayā’*, which carries the meaning of modesty, integrity, inhibition, diffidence and sensibility. The Prophet insisted that Muslims observe the principle of *ḥayā’* in their deeds and their words, he said; *“Every religion has a unique essence. Islam’s essence is ḥayā’.”*<sup>217</sup>

Based upon this there is a standard of modesty in Islam for both men and women in relation to attire. For men, the minimum amount to be covered is between the navel and the knee.<sup>218</sup> Moreover, referring to gold and silk, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, *“These are forbidden for men among my followers but permissible for women.”*<sup>219</sup> This means that men are not allowed to wear any garment or item with either silk or gold, such as, a silky shirt or a gold watch. For women, who are in the presence of men not related to them, the dress code asks them to cover their whole body with the exception of their face and hands. In the Qur’an Allah says; *“O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their head covering all over their bodies. That will be better, that they should be known (as free respectable women) so as not to be annoyed”*<sup>220</sup> and, *“Say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze*

215. Q. 16:81

216. Q. 7:26.

217. Sunan Ibn Maja, al-Zuhd, 17.

218. According to one view in Maliki school of law, it can slightly be above the knee.

219. Sunan Ibn Maja: 3595; Sunan Abu Dawud: 4057

220. Q. 33:59

*and protect their private parts (from sins); and they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what appear thereof...*"<sup>221</sup> This whole dress code for women is known as the '*hijab*', meaning barrier, but popularly the term refers to the head scarf. Furthermore, both men and women are not allowed to wear clothes that are skin-tight or see-through. However, there is still more to the concept of dress code in the Muslim society. Allah says; "*And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their head covering over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to [those relatives who fall within bounds of close relationship explained in the Qur'an]...*"<sup>222</sup> It is obvious from the above verse that men are required to take the lead in respecting women and not engaging in or approving any activity which objectifies or demeans women. The same code of behavior applies to women as well. Therefore, it is important to be aware that even though the dress code in Islam is essential, without the notion of *ḥayā*, it loses its meaning and purpose.

## WHAT IS FORBIDDEN IN ISLAM?

At this point it is important to note that in Islamic law there is a maxim which states that everything is permissible except what the Law Giver, Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has clearly forbidden either in the Quran, or it is forbidden according to the Prophet's *Sunnah*. Moreover, another maxim states that whatever leads to the prohibited is itself forbidden. Finally, there is a maxim, which states that forbidden items may be treated as lawful for an exact temporary period, and should be subject to extremely strict rules, in the case of very urgent and compelling necessities, such as, starvation.

The Shari'ah originates in the divine revelation and is an integral part of the lives of Muslims. Its rules are both legal and religious at the same time. According to the Shari'ah, there are five values given to all aspects of life, which are as follows; obligatory (*wajib*), recommended (*mandub*), permissible (*mubah*), reprehensible (*makruh*), and forbidden (*haram*). A lot of the daily life either falls within the recommended, i.e. the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) or *mubah*, i.e. that which is neutral to legal and religious edicts. The more popular concepts of permissible and prohibited (*halal* and *haram*), are also both religious and legal categories that involve duties toward God and fellow human beings. It is important for the new Muslim to recognize that by avoiding what is forbidden, he or she is setting a tone for a healthy and sound way of life.

221. Q. 24:31

222. Q. 24:30-31

It is not within the scope of this section to discuss all of the prohibited aspects that Islam categorizes, however, the author will attempt to list a few. Allah states in the Qur'an;

*"Say: 'Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited you: Join not anything in worship with Him; be good and dutiful to your parents; kill not your children because of poverty - We provide sustenance for you and for them; come not near to shameful sins (or illegal sexual intercourse), whether committed openly or secretly, and kill not anyone whom Allah has forbidden, except for a just cause. This He has commanded you that you may understand. And come not near to the orphan's property, except to improve it, until he (or she) attains the age of full strength; and give full measure and full weight with justice. We burden not any person, but that which he can bear. And whenever you give your word, say the truth even if a near relative is concerned, and fulfill the Covenant of Allah, This He commands you, so that you may remember.' Verily, this (way) is my Straight Path, so follow it, and follow not (other) paths, for they will separate you away from His Path. This He has ordained for you that you may become pious."*<sup>223</sup>

There are numerous matters that are clearly forbidden in the Qur'an and the Sunnah and are recognized as sins. Firstly, Muslims are forbidden explicitly to worship anyone or anything other than Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. This is followed by numerous prohibitions and I will cite a few here. In Islam killing without just cause, i.e. murder is forbidden and so is suicide. Abortion is forbidden with the only exception being when the mother's life is in lethally threatened. Moreover, taking or giving interest (usury), fraud, stealing, gambling, slandering, drinking alcohol, eating any pork product, and taking any drugs that cause intoxication, are all prohibited. Self-mutilation as part of religious rites or in response to grief is strictly forbidden, as well as, scarring or tattooing the body regardless of any cultural

custom. Sexual relationships outside marriage are totally prohibited; therefore, adultery and homosexuality, which are not only personal sins, but are very serious crimes against the foundations of society, are firmly prohibited. These are some of the aspects of life that have been explicitly and permanently forbidden in Islam. It is important for the new Muslim to appreciate that these laws are present in Islam due to Allah's Wisdom, to make the person a good servant of Allah; they are not intended as any form of hardship. Allah says in the Qur'an;



223. Q. 6:151-153



*“Allah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you”,*<sup>224</sup> and, *“Allah does not want to place you in difficulty, but He wants to purify you, and to complete His Favor on you that you may be thankful”*<sup>225</sup>

## OPPRESSION AND TERRORISM HAS NO PLACE IN ISLAM

The unfortunate link made between Islam and terrorism in the contemporary world, is based upon a superficial interpretation of Islam by certain sections of both, the Muslim and non-Muslim society. Primarily, it is the misinterpretation of the term, ‘*jihad*’, which is in fact composed of at least fourteen aspects, none of them referring to the concept of holy war. The term *jihad* refers to struggle, which includes the struggle against the self, the struggle in the field of education to better oneself, the struggle to build a civilized society and the struggle regarding combative combat. On the subject of the struggle against the self, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said; *“The Mujahid is the one who struggles against his self to obey Allah.”*<sup>226</sup> In addition to the *Jihad* against the self, there is also a *Jihad* regarding society at large, which includes a struggle to disseminate Allah’s message, starting from the people close to oneself and, then to the entire society, in order to build a moral and good Muslim civilization. Finally, the combative combat *Jihad* is recognized as a communal obligation, whereby, the Muslims wage a defensive war in order to protect their religion and society. However, as stated earlier, *Jihad* was never limited to armed struggle only, but refers to attempting to live in accordance with the will of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted; it means disseminating His message through education, eliminating all the obstacles between Allah and human beings, enjoining good and forbidding evil.

*Jihad* is not an offensive fight to destroy others. On the contrary, it is a defensive struggle, aiming to protect and defend the rights of the Muslims. Importantly, it is about upholding what is just and establishing the rule of law. Establishing justice and fairness can even sometimes be realized by the means of the pen and through words, without the need for any other form of ruthless force. However, there are times when a believer cannot continue his or her struggle through their property, their hands or their words; but that does not mean that they can wage *Jihad* by taking up arms and blindly attacking the enemy. Indiscriminate individual acts of violence are by no means considered *Jihad*. Certain violent activities seen in the recent years, such as, suicide bombings and terrorist attacks, cannot be associated with *Jihad* nor do such atrocious acts qualify as *Jihad*. Such killings perpetrated by people in the name of religion are by no means justifiable; they do not befit the

224. Q. 2: 185

225. Q. 5:6

226. Sunan al-Tirmidhī, al-Fada’il al-Jihad, 2.



cherished moral values and virtues of Islam. Such acts are horrible atrocities, and crimes against humanity. Whenever the Prophet set out to fight, he considered all options to establish peace, before he picked up arms for battle, he said; *“Do not wish for an encounter with the enemy, (but) when you (have to) encounter them exercise patience.”*<sup>227</sup> With these words, he was clearly expressing that fighting was not something to be desired. The Prophet’s advice about keeping the peace reminds us of the following Qur’anic verses; *“If*

*they incline towards peace, you [Prophet] must also incline towards it, and put your trust in Allah”*,<sup>228</sup> and, *“But as for those who seek refuge with people with whom you have a treaty, or who come over to you because their hearts shrink from fighting against you or against their own people, Allah could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you. So if they withdraw and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then Allah gives you no way against them.”*<sup>229</sup> Keeping these commandments in mind, we should understand the parameters set down by Islam regarding the concept of *Jihad*.

In contemporary society, the declaration of a combative war is foremost, the duty of the legitimate authority of a Muslim nation state only. It is also important to note that this specific duty can never be delegated to a group(s), living in a nation state, who acts against the government by terrorizing and controlling innocent citizens. No individual Muslim or group, residing in a nation state, has the right, duty or the role to declare *Jihad*, nor are the *ulama* placed in such a position to issue a call for combative *Jihad*. It is reported that the Prophet sent the following message to his military leaders, who were setting forth in the way of *Jihad* to stop hostile advances and defend Muslim territories; *“Advance in the name of Allah, with Allah, on the pattern of the Messenger of Allah. That means do not kill the elderly, infants or children and women. Do not exceed the proper bounds. Gather your spoils and make peace ‘and do good. Lo! God loves those who do good.”*<sup>230</sup> The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), observed the laws of war even in the most upsetting conditions and times. He never approved of inhuman, savage and begrudging behaviors during war. It is clear that any form of terrorism, and terrorist acts, including any kind of suicide attacks that kill indiscriminately, are utterly unacceptable forms of combat in Islam.

227. Sahih Muslim, Jihad wa siyar, 19

228. Q. 8:61.

229. Q. 4:90.

230. Q. 2:195



SOME VIRTUES

## SOME VIRTUES

### TAQWA

All virtues in Islam commence from *taqwa*, which is to have consciousness of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, love Him and His Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and have fear of Allah. In the Qur'an, those who believe and perform good deeds are described as '*muttaqi*' (pious). The most precious people in the eyes of God are the *muttaqi*.<sup>231</sup> Allah is with those who are pious and with the people who do good deeds.<sup>232</sup> Allah says; *"Goodness (taqwa) does not consist in turning your face towards East or West. The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture, and the Prophets; who give away some of their wealth, however much they cherish it, to their relatives, to orphans, the needy, travelers and beggars, and to liberate those in bondage; those who keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms; who keep pledges whenever they make them; who are steadfast in misfortune, adversity, and times of danger. These are the ones who are true, and it is they who are aware of God."*<sup>233</sup> The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) emphasized that a believer needs to uphold *taqwa* in every condition, he said; *"Have taqwa of Allah wherever you are, and follow an evil deed with a good one to wipe it out, and treat the people with good manners."*<sup>234</sup> It is important for the new Muslim to understand that the respect and the obedience of God, based on fear only is not recognized in Islam, since the love of Allah is always prioritized over the fear of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. The understanding of the term, 'fear of Allah', which is often incorrectly translated as the only meaning of *taqwa*, should be recognized to mean, to shy away from sinning and violating God's commands, as well as, being genuinely perturbed about being shamed on the Day of Judgment. The rationale behind this principle is to guide Muslims to able to obey God out of their intense love for Him and the immense desire to earn His Pleasure. In other words, to have the wish to obey Him because they want to, and not only because they have to, out of fear of His Wrath and punishment. It is important to know that while delivering his message, the Prophet always approached people with love and affection, rather than, with a strict and daunting attitude.<sup>235</sup>

231. Q. 49:13

232. Q. 16:128.

233. Q. 2:177.

234. Sunan al-Tirmidhī, al-Birr, 55.

235. Q. 3:159.



To achieve *taqwa* is the definite way to overcome all kinds of hardships in this world and the world to come.<sup>236</sup> Regarding religious issues, a Muslim should look towards the ones who are better than him or her, and strive to do even better; and regarding worldly blessings, a Muslim should look to those who have less than him or her and be thankful to Allah. According to the Prophet, these are the characteristics of a “thankful and patient believer.” A pious person takes the following command to heart; *“Help one another to do*

*what is right and good; do not help one another towards sin and hostility.*”<sup>237</sup> Being aware of one’s own weaknesses and sins, and asking for forgiveness from both people and Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, are qualities of a pious human being. It is reported in one hadith that one of the Companions of the Prophet, Hanzala, developed an apprehension concerning himself; he observed that while he was in company of the Prophet, he was positively influenced by the Prophet’s (peace and blessings be upon him), in such a way that he felt immediately the blessings of heaven and the fear of the torments of hell. However, when he returned home, and partook in his daily activities, he was unable to call to mind these important issues and feelings. Hanzala felt that his behavior was hypocritical and consulted the Prophet. The Prophet consoled him and said; *“If you were to abide in the state that you are in when you are with me, then the Angels would shake hands with you in your gatherings, and upon your bedding, and in your paths. However, O Hanzala! There is a time for this and a time for that.”*<sup>238</sup>

Here it is apt to inform the new Muslim that a misconception regarding religious life is to envision *taqwa* as, either an unattainable state, or to idealize it too much. It is not appropriate to consider that *taqwa* will make life more difficult for oneself, or to idealize the attainment of *taqwa* in such a way as to not consider the material and the spiritual capacity of oneself as a human being. The Prophet always asked his companions to do things in moderation and to not exceed their capacity. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said; *“Abstinence in the world is not, by prohibiting (oneself) the lawful nor by neglecting wealth. Instead abstinence in the world is that you do not hold more firmly to what is in your hand than to what is in the hand of God, and that you be more hopeful of the rewards*



236. Sunan Ibn Maja, al-Zuhd, 24.

237. Q. 5:2.

238. Sahih Muslim, al-Tawba, 12.



*that come with an affliction that you may suffer if it remains with you.*"<sup>239</sup> The Prophet did not live his life in seclusion, but at the same time, he did not lose himself in worldly affairs as well. In his Last Sermon, the Prophet proclaimed that the Arabs did not have any superiority over non-Arabs, non-Arabs over Arabs, white people over black people, and black people over white people, except in the matter of *taqwa*.<sup>240</sup>

One day, the Prophet met a group of his companions. They told him; *"We see you are very content today."* Upon this, the Prophet said; *"Yes, alhamdulillah."* When the companions began to speak about wealth, the Prophet said; *"There is nothing wrong for a pious person being rich, but for him, health is better than wealth, and spiritual contention is better than worldly blessings."*<sup>241</sup> When the Prophet was once asked the main reason for why people were admitted to Paradise, he replied; *"Taqwa and good character."*<sup>242</sup> Allah says in the Qur'an; *"You who believe, be mindful of Allah, as is His due, and make sure you devote yourselves to Him, to your dying moment. Hold fast to God's rope all together; do not split into factions. Remember Allah's favor to you: you were enemies and then He brought your hearts together and you became brothers by His grace; you were about to fall into a pit of Fire and He saved you from it— in this way Allah makes His revelations clear to you so that you may be rightly guided."*<sup>243</sup>

## HUMILITY

The word, 'dutiful humility' (*khushū*), means, 'quietly standing still with sobriety and submission'; it refers to being humble before Allah and, being respectful and loyal to Him with one's mind, body and spirit. In the Qur'an, the term is mentioned as one of the essential characteristics of a believer. It is used with the connotation of humility,<sup>244</sup> respect,<sup>245</sup> submission,<sup>246</sup> dependence,<sup>247</sup> and lowering

239. Sunan al-Tirmidhī, al-Zuhd, 29.

240. Ibn Hanbal, 5, 411.

241. Ibn Hanbal, V, 372.

242. Sunan al-Tirmidhī, al-Birr, 62; Sunan Ibn Maja, al-Zuhd, 29.

243. Q. 3:102-104.

244. Q. 33:35.

245. Q. 21:90.

246. Q. 3:199.

247. Q. 68:43.

the gaze.<sup>248</sup> These are physical manifestations of one's deep belief and respect to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. Allah says; *"Is it not time for believers to humble their hearts to the remembrance of Allah and the Truth that has been revealed, and not to be like those who received the Scripture before them, whose time was extended but whose hearts hardened and many of whom were lawbreakers?"*<sup>249</sup> Concerning this the Prophet said; *"God looks at people's hearts and deeds, not at their physical appearance and properties."*<sup>250</sup> According to Ibn Abbas, when the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), went out for a ritual rain prayer during the time of draught, he dressed humbly and modestly. He continued his supplication and chanted the *takbīr* with the greatest of humility.<sup>251</sup> A human being needs to be aware of the fact that he or she needs to display the greatest of humbleness before their Creator. The feeling of humility is the essence of a genuine prayer.<sup>252</sup>

The locus of *khushū'* is the heart. Once this state is born in the heart, it manifests itself through the entire being of the person; it shapes all of the character and behavior of the believer, such as, speaking, eating, walking, and clothing. However, even at the time of the Prophet it was known that sometimes people may pretend that they are humble in their deeds in order to gain recognition in the eyes of others. Abu al-Darda, the Companion of the Prophet (may Allah be pleased with him) said; *"I take refuge from such sedition towards God."* When he was asked what false humility and modesty entailed, he replied; *"It is a state of being where the heart does not feel anything, but the body pretends that it is humble."*

The virtue of *khushū'* should not be limited to religious rituals only, but rather it must be present in every sphere of one's life. In order to sustain this mode of behavior, the Muslim needs to have the awareness that he or she is present before Allah at all times; he or she needs to make sure to implement '*ihsān*' (i.e. the awareness that God sees you all the time even if you do not see Him).<sup>253</sup> The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessing be upon him), supplicated to Allah by saying; *"O Allah, to You I have bowed, and in You I*



248. Q. 54:7.

249. Q. 57:16.

250. Sahih Muslim, al-Birr, 34.

251. Sunan al-Tirmidhī, al-Jum'a, 43

252. Q. 7:55.

253. Sahih Muslim, al-Iman, 1.

*believe, and to You have I submitted. My hearing, my sight, my brain, my bones and my strength are humbled in front of You.*"<sup>254</sup>

## PATIENCE

Patience is one the most essential virtues of a Muslim. Primarily, patience is one of the most crucial requirements for having genuine belief. It was one of the most important traits the early Muslims exhibited during the first thirteen years of Islam in Mecca. Due to their steadfast patience, many of the early Muslims were able to maintain their beliefs. Perhaps that is why, when the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), was asked; *"what is faith?"* he replied; *"Patience and tolerance."* Abdullah b. Mas'ud said; *"Patience is half of the faith"* and Ali (may Allah be pleased him), likened patience to the head of a body and pointed to the fact, that just as a body cannot survive without a head, so faith will not advance without patience. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said; *"Worship is a light, charity is a proof (of one's faith) and patience is brightness."*<sup>255</sup>

Patience does not only refer to endurance against afflictions, but also to observing Allah's commandments, concerning His obligations and prohibitions. Performing worship that will help faith develop towards perfection depends on patience. For example, fasting is associated with patience, so much so that, the Prophet called the month of Ramadan; *"the month of patience."*<sup>256</sup> Piety and gentleness, which are characteristics of a mature character stem from being patient and patience is truly what is able to control the self. Once, the Bedouin Aqra b. Habis, who had recently accepted Islam, decided to relieve himself, in one of the corners of the mosque where the flooring was sand based. The companions immediately intervened and scolded Aqra b. Habis. The Prophet, who always advised patience to his companions, asked them to leave Aqra alone. Then he himself called upon Aqra and explained to him his error by saying; *"This house was built to remember God's name, and to pray. It is wrong to relieve yourself here."*<sup>257</sup> Aqra was so touched by the Prophet's polite and patient attitude that he said; *"May my mother and father be sacrificed for you. The Prophet neither cursed me nor scolded me."* The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing be upon him), asked Muslims to avoid anger as it defies patience. He advised the importance of anger management. Once someone asked the Prophet to give him some advice; the Prophet told him; *"Do not get angry!"* The man repeated his question three times, and the Prophet gave him

254. Sunan al-Tirmidhī, al-Davat, 32.

255. Sahih Muslim, al-Tahara, 1.

256. Abu Dawud, al-Siyam, 54; Ibn Maja, al-Siyam, 43.

257. Sahih al-Bukhari, al-Wudu, 58.



the same answer all three times.<sup>258</sup> It is very important to stay calm and patient, even if there are means to chastise the person one is angry with;<sup>259</sup> the Qur'an gives glad tidings of paradise to those who are able to curb their anger.<sup>260</sup> Managing anger in a difficult situation and circumstances in the Qur'anic vocabulary would mean; *"preventing evil in the best possible manner."*<sup>261</sup> Due to this the Prophet said; *"The strong man is not he who beats someone in wrestling, but he who controls himself when he is angry."*<sup>262</sup>



Patience is the way of the prophets who had strong wills and determination.<sup>263</sup> Through patience, Ismael (peace be upon him) surrendered his will to his father who agreed to sacrifice him according to the command of Allah<sup>264</sup>; it was through 'beautiful patience' that Yaqub (peace be upon him), dealt with the loss of his son, Joseph,<sup>265</sup> and it was through patience that Ayyub (peace be upon him), was cured from his long-lasting ailments.<sup>266</sup> The patience of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was such that it brought endurance to the trials and tribulations in Mecca; and it was the root cause of building a devoted society in Medina. In the words of the Prophet; *"patience is the light that brightens the path of the Muslims".*<sup>267</sup> In this regard, one needs to take the principle of patience as a guide in serving Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, in observing His commandments and in taming the cravings of the ego. A Muslim should endure all calamities, face all tribulations, and overcome all challenges with patience. It is also important to note that Muslims are not only tested with difficulties but also with wealth and blessings. In the case of the latter, patience, requires maintaining the belief in Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, and serving Him without being allured by the seemingly never ending material pleasures and blessings of the world. The following statement of 'Abd Allah b. 'Awf captures this notion perfectly; *"We were tested*

258. Sahih al-Bukhari, al-Adab, 76.

259. Abu Dawud, al-Adab, 3; Ibn Maja, al-Zuhd 18.

260. Q. 3: 133-134.

261. Q. 41: 34.

262. Sahih Muslim, al-Birr, 107.

263. Q. 46:35.

264. Q. 37:102.

265. Q. 12:18.

266. Q. 21:83-84; 38:41-44.

267. Sahih Muslim, al-Taharat, 1.

*along with the Messenger of Allah by adversity, so we were patient, then we were tested after him with prosperity, but we were not patient.*”<sup>268</sup>

Being patient does not mean to be submissive in difficult situations. Real patience is to perform good deeds and to speak the truth, despite facing hard and trying circumstances. The advice of Luqman to his son as described in the Qur’an is truly an advice for us all; *“Keep up the prayer, my son; command what is right; forbid what is wrong; bear anything that happens to you steadfastly: these are things to aspire towards.”*<sup>269</sup>

## GOODNESS

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said; *“The best of you is the one, whose goodness is hoped for, and people are safe from his evil. And the worst of you is he whose goodness is not hoped for, and people are not safe from his evil.”*<sup>270</sup> The term ‘goodness’ is one of the richly textured words most frequently used the Qur’an and in the Prophetic traditions. It is mentioned a hundred and seventy-six times in the Qur’an with its different meanings. It is possible to categorize those meanings under such terms as, good, beautiful, precious and valuable. It also carries the meaning of revelation,<sup>271</sup> wisdom,<sup>272</sup> and beneficial.<sup>273</sup>

‘Goodness’ is one of the most prominent concepts mentioned in many hadiths. The Prophet often opened his statements with the following words; *“The best people among you....,” “the best of the worships...”,* and, *“The best Muslim is...”*, while giving lessons to the Muslims on issues related to worship and morality. In one hadith on integrity and solidarity the Prophet said; *“The best thing to do in Islam is to feed others, and greet everyone.”*<sup>274</sup> At another time he (peace and blessings be upon him) said; *“The best of your worship is salah”*<sup>275</sup> and yet in another hadith he said; *“Ḥayā’ brings ḥayā’.”*<sup>276</sup> The Prophet equated the virtue of ‘ḥayā’ with goodness by saying; *“ḥayā’ is pure goodness.”*<sup>277</sup> Through their intentions and deeds people acquire goodness, the Prophet described this as; *“Surely, goodness is filled treasures. Those treasures have keys; glad tidings to those, in whose*

268. Sunan al-Tirmidhī, Sifat al-Qiyama, 30.

269. Q. 31:17.

270. Sunan al-Tirmidhī, al-Fitan, 76.

271. Q. 2:105; 16:30.

272. Q. 2:269.

273. Q. 6:17;10:107; 17:11.

274. Sahih al-Bukhari, al-Iman, 6; al-Isti’zan, 9.

275. Sunan Ibn Maja, al-Tahara, 4.

276. Sahih Muslim, al-Iman, 60; Ibn Hanbal, IV, 427.

277. Sahih Muslim, al-Iman, 61.

hands Allah places the keys to good, and, woe unto those, in whose hands Allah places the keys to do evil.”<sup>278</sup> Moreover, the Prophet said that goodness is related to how a Muslim positively responds to any incident or event, he said; *“How content is the believer! All of his deeds are good and blessed. This is the privilege of a believer. If a believer feels thankful upon the reception of a blessing, this is good for him. If he is thankful upon receiving infliction and hardship, this is good for him too.”*<sup>279</sup> Aisha (may Allah be pleased



with her), relates that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), taught her the following prayer; *“O God, I ask You for all that is good, in this world and in the Hereafter, what I know and what I do not know. O God, I seek refuge with You from all evil, in this world and in the Hereafter, what I know and what I do not know. O God, I ask You for the good that Your slave and Prophet have asked You for, and I seek refuge with You from the evil from which Your slave and Prophet sought refuge. O God, I ask You for Paradise and for that which brings one closer to it, in word and deed, and I seek refuge in You from Hell and from that which brings one closer to it, in word and deed. And I ask You to make every decree that You decree concerning me good.”*<sup>280</sup> The new Muslim should know that Muslims are asked to use their *ikhtiyār* (free will) towards acquiring goodness; it is interesting to note that, ‘*ikhtiyār*’ stems from the word, ‘*khayr*’ (goodness) and means to choose the good between a numbers of options.

## GENEROSITY

The Companions used to say that the Prophet was more generous than the wind.<sup>281</sup> If he was asked to give something of what he had, the Prophet never hesitated to offer it,<sup>282</sup> and was known to never say ‘no’.<sup>283</sup> He did not hesitate to share his food, clothes and knowledge. Generosity means to be able to share. It is the ability to share love, compassion, knowledge, and wealth. Allah states; *“They give food to the poor, the orphan, and the captive, though they love it themselves, saying,*

278. Sunan Ibn Maja, Sunnah, 19.

279. Sahih Muslim, al-Zuhd, 64.

280. Ibn Maja, al-Du’ā, 4.

281. Sahih al-Bukhari, al-Bad’ al-Wahy, 1.

282. Ibn Hanbal, I, 326.

283. Sahih Muslim, al-Fadāil, 56.

*'We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: We seek neither recompense nor thanks from you. We fear the Day of our Lord—a woefully grim Day.' So Allah will save them from the woes of that Day, give them radiance and gladness.*'<sup>284</sup> If a person spends their wealth in order to gain fame, honor, position and prestige, this does not count as generosity. Such expenditure can only cause harm to the one who spends it rather than bring him or her blessings. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), describes the state of affairs of those who spend without considering Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, as; *"...Then will be brought a man whom Allah had made abundantly rich and had granted every kind of wealth. He will be brought forward and God will make him recount His blessings and he will recount them and (admit having enjoyed them in his lifetime). Allah will (then) ask: What have you done (to requite these blessings)? He will say: I spent money on every cause, which You wished that it should be spent. Allah will say: You are lying. You did (so) that it might be said about (You): 'He is a generous fellow' and so it was said. Then God will pass orders and he will be dragged with his face downward and thrown into Hell.*"<sup>285</sup> A generous person should give charity for the sake of Allah alone and should not expect any repayment. Moreover, a Muslim should not shame the person to whom he or she provides aid, since, whenever the Prophet helped the needy he was very careful not to hurt their feelings or belittle them.<sup>286</sup> The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said; *"The similitude of a miserly man and the giver of charity is that of two persons with coats of mail over them; when the giver of charity intends to give charity, it expands over him (so much so) that the footprints are also obliterated. And when the miserly man intends to give charity, it contracts over him, and his hands are tied up to his collar bone, and every ring is fixed up to another.*"<sup>287</sup>

Allah Almighty encourages generosity and praises it as a virtue, however, at the same time He discourages extravagance and wastefulness; He asks his human beings to adopt the middle path in all their actions and avoid being people of extremes. In the Qur'an he says; *"They are those who are neither wasteful nor niggardly when they spend, but keep to a just balance.*"<sup>288</sup> The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) went as far as outlining a criteria for being generous by saying; *"Eat, drink, clothe yourselves, and give charity without being extravagant, and without showing off.*"<sup>289</sup> However, in the case of a dire need of society, it is permitted to donate more, for instance, the Prophet praised this attitude as a virtue, when

284. Q. 76:8-11.

285. Sahih Muslim, al-Imara, 152.

286. Sahih al-Bukhari, Fard al-Hums, 7.

287. Sahih Muslim, al-Zakat, 77.

288. Q. 25:67.

289. Al-Nasai, al-Zakat, 66.



Abu Bakr donated all of his wealth, and Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both) went onto donate half of his wealth.<sup>290</sup> Generosity has no limit; it can be petite or vast, even showing sensitivity towards another person is a form of generosity.<sup>291</sup> In the same line of thought, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), warned the Muslims against the extreme forms of stinginess that is greediness, by supplicating; *“O God! I seek refuge with You from miserliness; and I seek refuge with You from cowardice; and seek refuge*



*with You from being sent back to geriatric old age; and I seek refuge with You from the affliction of this world; and I seek refuge with You from the punishment of the grave.”*<sup>292</sup> A miserly individual is a narcissistic person; always thinking of himself or herself first and searching for happiness in materialism and wealth. The Prophet said; *“Miserliness and faith cannot reside in one’s heart at the same time.”*<sup>293</sup> A Muslim should never forget that all wealth belongs to Allah alone and He can give it to whomsoever He likes, and He can take it away from whomsoever He dislikes.<sup>294</sup> The Prophet said; *“Generosity is close to God, close to Paradise, close to the people and far from the Fire. Stinginess is far from God, far from Paradise, far from the people and close to the Fire. The ignorant generous person is more beloved to God than the worshipping stingy person.”*<sup>295</sup>

## TRUTHFULNESS

It is a religious, moral and worldly imperative for a human being to speak the truth, and to avoid lying. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said; *“Leave what makes you feel in doubt for what does not make you feel in doubt. The truth brings tranquility while falsehood sows doubt.”*<sup>296</sup> In order to have this tranquility, one needs to be careful, and not be rash in saying everything that comes to mind. Otherwise, there may be the danger of combining the truth with lies. The Prophet warned us concerning this issue with the following statement; *“It is enough*

290. Sunan al-Tirmidhī, al-Manaqib, 16.

291. Sunan al-Tirmidhī, al-Zuhd, 17.

292. Sahih al-Bukhari, al-Da’awat, 37.

293. Al-Nasai, al-Jihad, 8.

294. Q. 3:26.

295. Sunan al-Tirmidhī, al-Birr, 40.

296. Sunan al-Tirmidhī, Sifat al-Qiyama, 60.



*falsehood for a man to relate everything he hears.*"<sup>297</sup> The Prophet also said; *"The signs of a hypocrite are three: Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie; and whenever he promises, he breaks his promise; and whenever he is entrusted, he betrays (proves to be dishonest)."*<sup>298</sup> The Prophet also said that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, does not need the hunger or the thirst of a fasting person who does not stop lying<sup>299</sup> and that the blessings from fasting for such people, are only hunger and thirst.<sup>300</sup> Being honest and truthful is an

important principle of business life as well, and the Prophet said; *"If merchants are honest and open, their transaction will be blessed, but if they tell lies and conceal anything, the blessing of their transaction will be lost."*<sup>301</sup>

Although Islam prioritizes truthfulness in words and actions at all times, the Prophet stipulated the right to tell a lie only in three conditions: to make spouses in marriage glad, to eliminate sour feelings between two people and to win a war.<sup>302</sup> The Prophet lived a truthful life and asked the Muslims to be truthful in their words and actions. Truthfulness is the alignment of one's intentions, words and deeds. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said; *"Telling the truth is a virtue and virtue leads to Paradise and the servant who endeavors to tell the truth is recorded as truthful, and lying is an obscenity and obscenity leads to the Hell-Fire, and the servant who endeavors to tell a lie is recorded as a liar."*<sup>303</sup>

297. Sunan Abu Dawud, al-Adab, 80.

298. Sahih al-Bukhari, al-Adab, 69.

299. Sahih al-Bukhari, al-Sawm, 8.

300. Al-Darimi, al-Riqaq, 12.

301. Al-Nasai, al-Buyu', 4;

302. Sunan al-Tirmidhi, al-Birr, 26.

303. Sahih Muslim, al-Birr, 105.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ISLAM

### **1. What are the differences between the Qur'anic verses and hadiths?**

The Qur'anic verses are literally the words of Allah. The hadiths consists of the sayings, actions, and tacit approvals (*Sunnah*) of our Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). It is important to note that the hadiths are an indispensable part of religion and cannot be separated from the Qur'an. In this respect, one cannot think about the Qur'an without the *Sunnah* just as one cannot think about the *Sunnah* without the Qur'an.

### **2. Do I have to practice circumcision?**

Circumcision is a process by which the foreskin of a male private part is partially or fully removed. All Muslim male babies are circumcised. There is no such equivalent for females and any circumcision of females is prohibited in Islam. Any adult male who accepts Islam is not required to undergo circumcision but it is a *Sunnah* and strongly recommended.

### **3. Is Jesus the son of God?**

Islam categorically rejects the notion that Jesus is the son of God. Jesus (peace be up on him) is recognized as one of the messengers of Allah.

### **4. Why do we need to take ablution before praying and why do we pray five times?**

Cleanliness is an essential principle in Islam. Therefore, Muslims are asked to be clean and wear good clothes before they present themselves before Allah, to worship. The five times prayers during the day and night, keep clear for the Muslim, the perspective of who he or she is in relation to Allah. For indeed, the new Muslim should be aware that however faithful and conscientious an individual is, such reminders are essential in a day so as not to lose sight of one's relationship with Allah, his or her responsibilities and the ultimate aim of life. Moreover, the daily prayers accustom the person to gratitude, move the human being closer to his or her Lord, help the believer gain spiritual reward and create an avenue for redemption of minor sins. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) once

asked his Companions, “If there was a river by the door of anyone of your houses and he took a bath in it five times a day, would there remain any dirt?” When they answered, “No”, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) stated; “That is the example of the five daily prayers with which Allah blots out evil deeds.”<sup>304</sup>

### **5. What should I do to be a good Muslim?**

Believe in the six articles of faith, practice the five pillars of Islam, avoid the prohibited in Islam, follow the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), and be virtuous in everyday life. Please read the book for further details.

### **6. Not all my family and friends are Muslims. How should I behave with them?**

Islam teaches affinity, kindness and love between close relations and friends. Your first responsibility to them is to demonstrate to them in the best manner possible, the truth of Islam. However, it is their choice if they accept or reject it. There is no force in religion. Take part in their social gatherings as long as it does not contradict with the teachings of Islam. This means that if alcohol or anything prohibited is being consumed or spoken of, then you should politely take your leave. The best way to promote Islam and be a good Muslim is to be steadfast and virtuous.

### **7. Before I became a Muslim, I was married and I have children. Should I leave my spouse? If she or he does not want to be a Muslim, what should I do? What should I do about my children?**

If you are already married to a spouse who has also become a Muslim, then your marriage is valid. There is no need to remarry according to Islam. If you are a male Muslim and your wife belongs to the People of the Book, such as Judaism or Christianity, then your marriage is still valid. However, if your wife belongs to a religion not designated as People of the Book, then your marriage can only be validated by her also becoming a Muslim. Whereas, if you are a female Muslim who is already married to a non-Muslim, no matter if he is or not of the people of the Book, your marriage can be only validated if he also accepts Islam as his faith, otherwise, you are not allowed to stay married to him. Concerning children of any such marriage, if they are not adults, then it is the duty and responsibility of the father to bring them up as Muslims. On the other hand, if they are adults then there is no responsibility except for inviting them to Islam in the best of manners.

304. Sahih al-Bukhari, Mawaqit, 6; Nasai, Salat, 7.



## 8. What is the purpose of Zakah?

Zakah is given primarily to purify the wealth of a person and to morally distance the person from miserliness and greed; turning an individual into a giving and generous person. Please read the *zakah* section of this book for further details.

## 9. Can I worship in my local language? Do I have to learn Arabic? Does God not understand my language?

All supplications can be performed in your local language at any time of the day, Allah is omniscient, you do not have to learn the Arabic language. However, for the five time prayers it is obligatory for Muslims to learn surah *Fatiha* and the Arabic words and phrases uttered during the ritual prayers. It does not take much time for an individual to learn and memorize such a short surah of seven verses. According to Abu Hanifa, until the individual is able to memorize these words, which should be in a highly limited time, the new Muslim is permitted to, for a limited short time only, to recite the surah in his or her own language. It is important to note that this is not an alternative, and the new Muslim is obliged to memorize the Arabic terminology as soon as possible. The reason for the *salah* being in the Arabic language is twofold; firstly, that is how the method of performing the *salah* was transmitted to Muslims through the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), and secondly, it enables the Muslim to join the congregational ritual prayers at any place in the world, hence, further reinforcing the concept of unity in Islam.

## 10. If I drink some wine, is it a problem?

Yes, because Allah has prohibited the consumption of alcohol in any amount. In the same manner, all intoxicants are forbidden. If one has drunk such an intoxicant then it is advisable to ask for forgiveness from Allah, He is oft forgiving and furthermore, make a sincere intention not to take any kind of intoxicant ever again.

## 11. I am now a Muslim. What do I have to do to repent for my previous sins?

When someone embraces Islam, Allah forgives all his or her previous sins and wrong deeds. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said; *“If a person accepts Islam, such that his Islam is good, Allah will decree reward for every good deed that he did before, and every bad deed that he did before will be erased. Then after that will come the reckoning; each good deed will be rewarded*

*ten times up to seven hundred times. And each bad deed will be recorded as it is, unless Allah, the Mighty and Sublime, forgives it.*"<sup>305</sup>

## **12. What are the most severe sins in Islam?**

The major sins in Islam are those that are prohibited by Allah in the Qur'an and by the Prophet in his sayings. However, it is important to remember that even a minor sin, if repeated continually, equates to a major sin. It is reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said to his companions; *"Avoid the seven destructive sins."* They said; *"O Allah's Messenger! And what are they?"* He replied; *"Committing shirk, sorcery, to take a life unjustly, interest (usury), to consume the wealth or property of an orphan, to flee on the day of the battle, and to slander the chaste, unaware, believing women."* In addition to these, there are other major sins, such as, adultery, fornication, homosexuality; stealing, committing fraud, gambling and taking intoxicants. However, Muslims must always remember that Allah is the Most Merciful, and they should repent to Him

## **13. What should I do to leave my old bad habits?**

Always keep in mind that Allah is Most Forgiving and Most Merciful. Focus on becoming virtuous, steadfast in worship and make supplications. Most of all, trust in Allah. Remember that any change takes time, and be moderate in your religion.

## **14. Can my daughter perform as an imam while we pray?**

Women are only allowed to lead other women in prayer. If you are a male then your daughter cannot lead you in prayer.

## **15. Do my wife and daughter have to wear headscarves?**

Only females that have reached puberty are obliged to wear a headscarf. Islam does have a dress code but it is important to know that there are no explicit rules in Islam about wearing any specific cultural or national attire. Please read the section on dress code for further details.

## **16. What is Jihad?**

Please refer to the section entitled 'Oppression and Terrorism has no Place in Islam'.

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305. Sunan al-Nasa'i, Book 47, Hadith 14.

**17. What is Shari'ah?**

Shari'ah is a far broader concept than, 'law', as it is generally perceived in the English language, since it includes not only penal, state, inheritance, trade and family law, but also doctrines of beliefs, manners, ethics, rituals and worship; each of these aspects have an impact in this world as well in the next world. Thus, Shari'ah is seen as paramount for both this world and the hereafter. In trying to explain the legal aspect of Shari'ah we use the term *fiqh*, which literally means understanding, but refers to the jurisprudential aspect of the Shari'ah, such as, the rights and obligatory acts pertaining to purity, worship and ritual, family, inheritance, trade and penal laws.

**18. What is the hereafter and what should I do in order to get to Paradise?  
What is the Day of Judgement?**

Please refer to the section entitled 'The Hereafter'.

**19. If I have to work, can I pray at home on Friday?**

No, the only exceptions for not praying the Friday prayer at the mosque for males are, that if they are travelling, ill or unable to reach the mosque due to environmental restraints.





## FINAL WORDS FOR THE NEW MUSLIM

This book has attempted to present to the new Muslim, the basics of Islam in order for him or her to understand the foundations of their newfound faith and to live his or her life according to the teachings of Islam. Nevertheless, it is vital that the reader understands that what has been presented in the book is, but, a brief glimpse into a vast subject. In fact, the knowledge relating to Islam and its sciences is immense, as it is based upon the Muslim scholarly and intellectual history of fourteen hundred years. Muslim scholars collectively, represent this knowledge, since it is not possible for one scholar or a group of them to singlehandedly deal with such a vast amount of knowledge in one lifetime. Therefore, the maxims found in the Qur'an; *"And ask the people of knowledge when you do not know"*<sup>306</sup> and, *"O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and all those in authority amongst you..."*<sup>307</sup> refers to recognizing one's limits and asking for assistance concerning knowledge, or any other issue, whenever the need arises. The main focus of this book is therefore, to assist the new Muslim in recognizing the path of submission to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, which is perfectly summarized in the following Qur'anic verse; *"Say: 'Verily, my prayer and my worship, my life and my death, are for God, the Lord of the worlds. He has no associate. This I am commanded and I am the first of those who submit.'"*<sup>308</sup>

The new Muslim has entered into a wonderful new phase of his or her life. This is a journey of self-discovery, followed by the discovery of the sacred. Imam Ghazali once said that happiness in this world is based upon four sequential components; the knowledge of the self, the knowledge of God, the knowledge of this world as it really is and finally, the knowledge of the next world as it truly is. Thus, in any event and situation the Muslim must learn to trust Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, be virtuous, perform the prayers, recite the Quran and live a pious life. With the will of Allah, he or she will be able to receive the blessings of this life and the Hereafter. However, on this journey, there will be many hurdles and challenges. In Islam, this worldly life is recognized as a test and the new Muslim should know that the true character of person is only ever truly revealed when under pressure. Therefore, the new Muslim should always exercise virtuous behavior, such as tolerance, patience, steadfastness, *ḥayā'*, and *taqwa*. Moreover, it is important to recognize that the Muslim society is not a faultless society and by no means is

306. Q. 16:43

307. Q. 4:59

308. Q. 6:162-163

it perfect. Many times a new Muslim may have high expectations from born Muslims; he or she needs to remember that Muslims come in all shapes and hues and they are by no means flawless with impeccable characters. Furthermore, due to a variety of Muslim cultures and societies the world over, there is also a valid diversity. At certain times, new Muslims find it hard to navigate such differences, but it is important to recognize that Islam is not a narrow literalistic faith. As mentioned earlier, Allah says in the Qur'an; *"Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair admonition, and argue with them in the best manner possible."*<sup>309</sup> Thus, New Muslims if pressed should discuss topics related to the sacred or the mundane with a gentle and compassionate approach and speak with both sympathy and empathy, whether their audience is Muslim or not. Moreover, it is important to recognize the fact that any one person does not have all the answers. Another important issue is the relationship with non-Muslim relatives; it is best, if possible, to build a healthy relationship with relatives that are non-Muslims, however, any such relationship should be based on the ethics and the morality of Islam. In fact, showing kindness to people, Muslims and non-Muslims, based upon moral standards is the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). Finally, every Muslim, whether they are born Muslims or have embraced Islam, should make it a habit to continually turn towards Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, and ask Him for guidance to be led to the Straight Path. This is because a Muslim should be humble enough to understand that guidance only comes from Allah and that it is possible that our own pride can lead us astray. It is in fact a blessing from Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, that a Muslim is able to recite numerous times in his or her daily prayers to Allah; *"Guide us to the Straight Path."*<sup>310</sup>

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309. Q. 16:125

310. Q. 1:6

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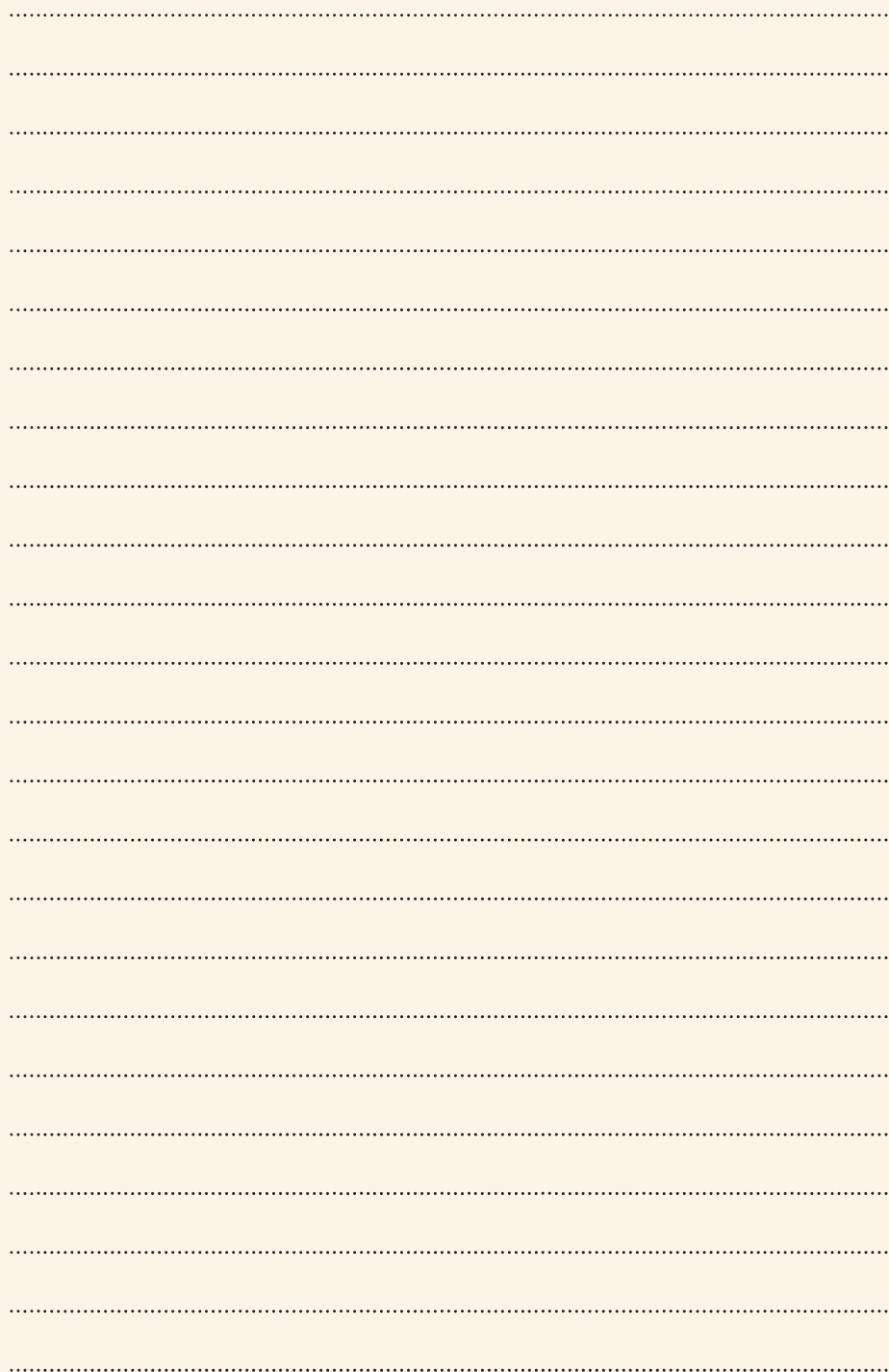




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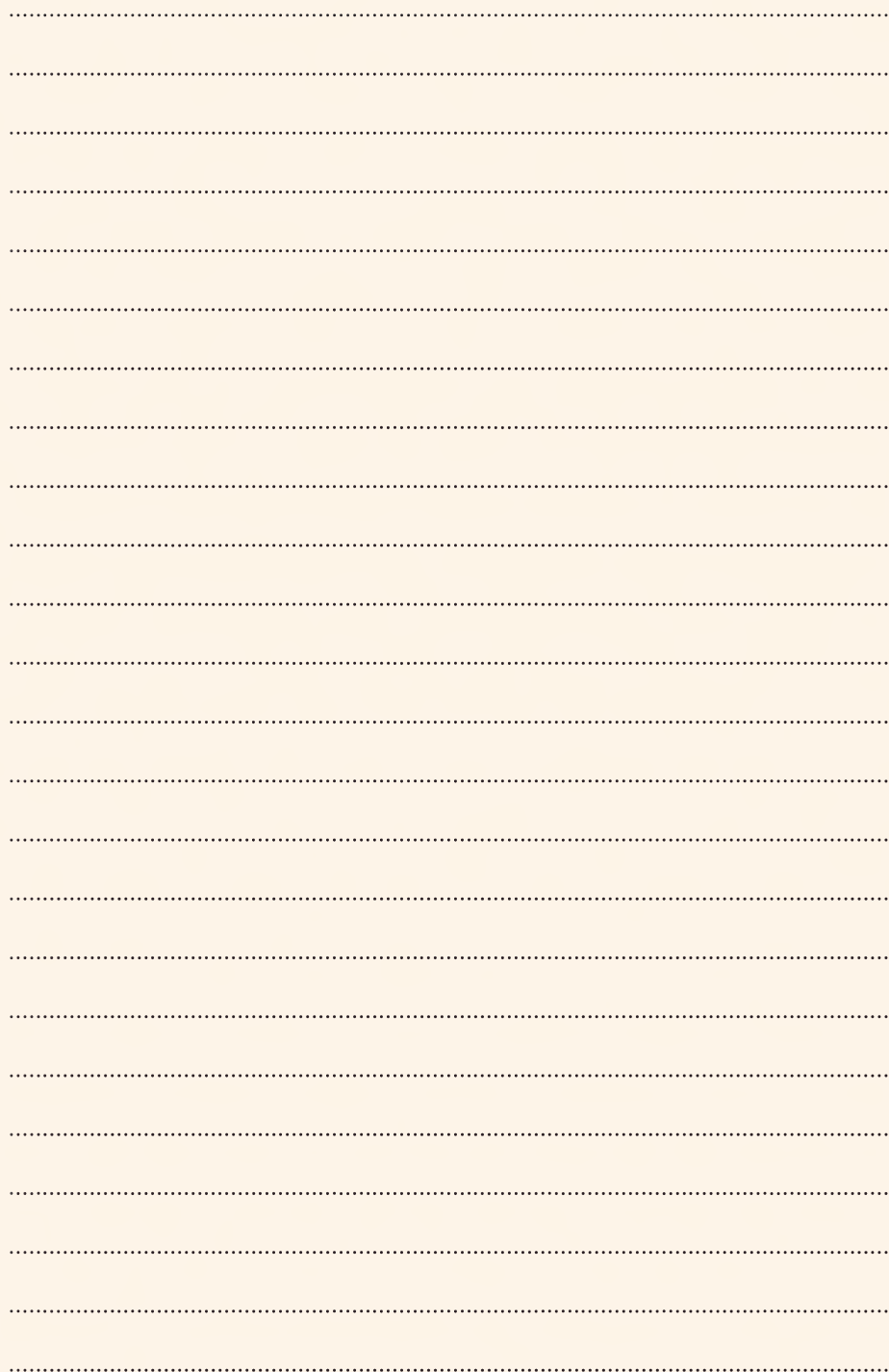
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